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Taking On the NCAA**

**Inside Climbing's  
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**Greed vs. the  
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# MEN'S JOURNAL

APRIL 2015 Vol. 24, No. 3

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Midway between Malibu and Santa Barbara, Ventura is refreshingly unpolished.

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ON THE COVER: Carbondale, Colorado, photographed for *Men's Journal* by Morgan Rachel Levy on January 9, 2015. Model wears shirt by SmartWool. Pants his own. Backpack by Gregory. Shoes by La Sportiva. Sunglasses by Revo.



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**TRAVEL**

## THE WORLD'S 50 BEST HIKES

Whether you have an hour to walk the world's most spectacular two miles (in Wyoming) or a week to cross the Alps, we have the game plan. Our top hikes vary in time commitment and difficulty, but every one is remote, wild, and full of epic views.



**STYLE**

## THE GUIDE TO SPRING SUITS

Lighten up: It's time to ditch the dark, heavy workwear for a suit that is comfortable, colorful, and a bit more casual. Here's how to find the right one for spring.

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Gyms are boring. That's why we asked trainers for inspiration from their top classes, where they use kay-aks, monkey bars, and Viking moves.



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A male triathlete is captured in motion, running along a dirt trail. He is wearing a dark-colored Hoka One One t-shirt, black shorts with the Hoka logo, a white cap, and sunglasses. The background is a blurred natural setting with tall grass and trees. The image is framed by a green vertical bar on the left and a blue vertical bar on the right.

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## SUPERHERO STRAHAN

Michael Strahan has one of the most stacked post-NFL résumés a retired player could have ["Michael Strahan's Mad Rush," by Stephen Rodrick]. Just reading about his flying red-eyes coast-to-coast to host four network TV shows left me feeling jet-lagged — I don't know how he stays so fresh on camera!

TANNER WYATT, EVANSVILLE, IN

## CARAMEL CORRECTED

I read with interest St. John Frizell's classic Irish coffee recipe ["Winter's Best Drink"]. As the grandson of a Dublin publican, I would have to question the use of simple syrup or granulated sugar. The authentic drink is always served in Ireland with brown sugar; it not only sweetens but also adds a rounded caramel flavor to the beverage. *Slainte!*

COLIN VIZE, NORTH FERRIBY, U.K.

## DANGEROUS OASIS

As a U.S. asset in the southern Philippines from 1999 to 2010, I wholeheartedly agree that El Nido and the entire



## "DR. ANDREW WEIL'S HEALTH TIP ABOUT RECOGNIZING THE HEALING POWER OF YOUR OWN BODY IS A HUGE INSIGHT."

Sulu archipelago is one of the most beautiful places on Earth ["Find Your Beach"], but it is also currently one of the most dangerous, especially for U.S. tourists. Palawan is a short boat ride for Malaysian terror organizations, and kidnap-for-ransom groups like Abu Sayyaf and Al Qaeda are active in the area. The U.S. State Department issued a travel warning last November.

RJ DUMONT, NASHUA, NH

## WEIL WISDOM

Dr. Andrew Weil's health tip about recognizing the healing power of your own body is a huge insight ["The Last Word," by Sean Woods]. When I had eye problems a year ago, doctors identified a thyroid issue and prescribed me several drugs with dangerous side effects. I said no to every treatment, and eight months later my episode subsided. Humans survived for thousands of years without pharmaceuticals. The body's first response is to heal itself — if we just give it the time to do so.

IAN JARVIS, NEW YORK CITY

## MISSION TO SWIM

The magazine's Record Book highlights are always incredibly impressive, but Lewis Pugh's story ["Swimming Across the Seven Seas," by David Browne] packed an extra environmental punch — nary a dolphin or shark in sight but more than one car tire while swimming the Mediterranean over four weeks? A stark reality check.

DREW LASSITER, TOWSON, MD

## GOVERNOR, INTERRUPTED

It was hard for me to agree with Erik Hedegaard's suggestion in "The Body, Slammed," that Jesse Ventura is just out for the money. Ventura originally asked for a public apology and no money. Chris Kyle refused to withdraw his accusations, so Ventura sued. People think that after Kyle was killed, Ventura should have withdrawn the lawsuit — but that would not have cleared his name.

ALEX YOUNG, STATESBORO, GA

Jesse Ventura has ascended to the throne as king of our culture of victimization. We Minnesotans are

used to his thin skin and his rantings about what a martyr he is. Now he bemoans how his life is ruined because he turned his back on his SEAL brothers and sued a widow for something her husband allegedly did — it's all too familiar.

JIM KOEPKE, BLOOMINGTON, MN



Jesse Ventura is a little misunderstood. It's hard to take a pro wrestler seriously when it comes to politics, but his views were never too irrational. He was obviously a dedicated SEAL, and having the SEALs turn against him during the *American Sniper* case cut him the deepest. The fuel behind the pending lawsuits must be rejection and pride.

KENNY TRUHN, HEMPSTEAD, NY

## SNOWBIRD STRIKES BACK

Your article "The Van Renaissance," by Jamie Kitman, was a timely and well-written piece save for the offensive characterization of Airstream drivers as "well-heeled, superannuated, and fundamentally out of control." Reckless drivers are definitely a problem, but they are not limited by age or socioeconomic status.

STEVE STANFILL, NEWBURGH, IN

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NOTEBOOK

# TRAVEL & ADVENTURE





RECORD BOOK

# Triumph on the Dawn Wall

How Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson conquered the impossible climb. **by DAN DUANE**

**TOMMY CALDWELL'S** shoulders trembled and his legs shook as he fought to stay on the smooth face of the 3,000-foot-high Dawn Wall, on Yosemite's El Capitan. Above him, Caldwell spotted a tiny hole just big enough for a single fingertip. If he lunged, he might be able to jam in one digit; if he slipped, he would plummet 25 feet before his rope caught and slammed him against the wall. "My body was physically failing, and I started screaming," Caldwell says.

For seven years, Caldwell had been searching for a way up the notoriously sheer cliff. He'd trained year-round to be

strong enough. He'd spent three months every winter living in his van while shuttling up and down the cliff, ascending more than 250,000 feet of rope over 500 days, all in an effort to find a way up. Now, in early January, with partner Kevin Jorgeson, Caldwell was on the verge of pulling off the hardest big-wall rock climb ever attempted.

Two thousand feet below, news trucks followed Caldwell's every move. The climb had become front-page news around the world, much to Caldwell's surprise. President Obama would even tweet congratulations from the White House. But now, with

Caldwell and Jorgeson (facing the camera) celebrate at the top of El Capitan after nearly three weeks on the wall.



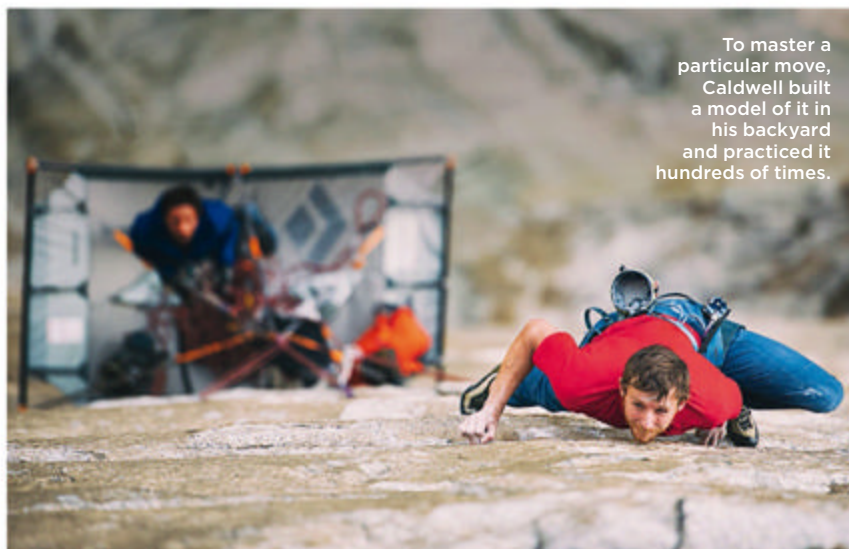
the world watching, Caldwell felt his fingers slipping. It was now or never. He launched himself upward, stretched out his right arm, and jammed his index finger into the hole. The top knuckle caught, and Caldwell stabilized his feet. Then he scrambled onto a ledge known as Wino Tower, hid his face from the world, and began to cry.

**TOMMY CALDWELL** grew up in Estes Park, Colorado, more than a decade after pioneering Yosemite climber Warren Harding made the first ascent of the Dawn Wall. Harding made that 1970 ascent via aid climbing — hammering pitons into the cliff, attaching stirrups to those pitons, then standing in the stirrups to hammer in more pitons. By the time an 18-year-old Caldwell arrived in 1996, the easier portions of El Cap had been free-climbed, meaning that climbers ascended by pulling solely on natural rock features, using ropes only for safety. Caldwell was just maturing as a Yosemite free-climber, making forays onto El Capitan, when he suffered three traumatic experiences. First, in late 2000, Caldwell and his soon-to-be wife, professional climber Beth Rodden, were climbing with two friends in Kyrgyzstan's Pamir mountains when they were kidnapped by terrorists. After six days in captivity, Caldwell shoved a guard off a cliff and they all escaped, eventually finding safety at a Kyrgyz military base.

Then, back in Colorado, in November 2001 Caldwell was fixing up a cabin when he severed his left index finger with a table saw. "One of my doctors said, 'I know you want to be a professional climber, but it's just not going to happen,'" says Caldwell. "I got really mad, and those months after were the most intensely focused of my life." Caldwell relearned how to climb with his shortened digit, then knocked off one El Capitan route after another, building an international reputation as one of the sport's biggest stars.

But in 2008, Caldwell's marriage began to unravel. "Everything was going downhill, and I just couldn't handle being around the house with Beth," he says. So Caldwell coped the only way he knew how, by packing up and heading to the mountains. He carried equipment and supplies to the top of El Capitan, tied an 1,800-foot rope to a tree, and chucked it over the biggest and steepest section — the Dawn Wall, long considered too sheer and too vertical to free-climb. Caldwell lowered himself to Wino Tower and set up his portaledge, a suspended tent that became, on and off for the next three months, the world's most precarious man cave.

"That was the darkest period of my life," says Caldwell, who channeled his heartbreak into hunting for a line up the rock face. "That's what really made the Dawn Wall happen. I



To master a particular move, Caldwell built a model of it in his backyard and practiced it hundreds of times.



## "IT WAS THE DARKEST PERIOD OF MY LIFE. I NEEDED TO BE SEARCHING FOR THE HOLY GRAIL."

needed to be searching for the Holy Grail."

Loneliness and cold eventually drove him down, and he might have never gone back if filmmaker Josh Lowell hadn't called months later. "I asked if Tommy had any projects I could film," Lowell says. "He was like, 'Well there's this one, but I'm not sure it's possible.'"

Lowell sent Caldwell back up with three friends, including cameraman Corey Rich. Lowell's subsequent film, *Progression*, showed Caldwell repeatedly failing on the hardest move, an eight-foot sideways jump to almost imperceptible holds. In a voice-over, Caldwell doubted he could ever do it. Climber Kevin Jorgeson, from Santa Rosa, California, heard that line and reached out. "I said, 'Hey, I don't have anything going on. Want a partner?'" Soon Jorgeson was 1,500 feet off the deck with

Caldwell, trying that same sideways jump.

"It's an extremely violent move," says Jorgeson, who earned a reputation for being one of the world's best boulderers, a discipline that emphasizes explosive strength over endurance. "Your fingers have to grab basically a doorjamb, and then you stop all that momentum with your left foot slamming into a corner. I nearly broke my ankle."

During the next four years, Caldwell remarried, and with new wife Rebecca Pietsch, an outdoor photographer, had a son they named Fitz. Through it all, Caldwell kept obsessing about the Dawn Wall — right down to building a replica of that jump in his backyard. "Tommy spent so many evenings hucking himself on that thing," says Pietsch. "I'd take Fitz out back to watch Daddy."

By last fall, Caldwell had mastered every move except that jump, so he worked out an insanely difficult 200-foot detour that allowed him to bypass it. Jorgeson, meanwhile, mastered the jump but struggled with other moves. Shortly after the New Year, they decided it was time.

Halfway up, they were delayed for a week while Jorgeson repeatedly fell on what he calls "an iron cross, reaching as far as you can, fingertip to fingertip between razor blades." When Jorgeson pulled through, Caldwell led the team upward. That final lunge to Wino Tower marked the end of the hardest climbing. "I broke down," says Caldwell. "The high point of my climbing career was coming at the exact spot where I was alone and trying to find myself."

Now, in the wake of his success, opportunities are pouring in for Caldwell — books, movies, talk shows. "I guess I'm embarking on a new adventure," he says. "It's a great testament to shooting the moon, not knowing if you're going to make it but going all in." ■



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# Grand Canyon Under Siege

A series of proposals threatens to overrun one of America's most iconic parks. **by DAVID BROWNE**



The Skywalk: Developers call it a model for future tourist ventures; critics deride it as the "toilet seat."

**N**EARLY 100 YEARS after it was declared a national park, the Grand Canyon is at the center of a historic development fight. Two massive projects, which could attract tens of thousands of new visitors to the area — and forever alter the character of Colorado Plateau — are slated to begin construction as early as next year. One is a housing and retail development,

larger than the Mall of America, that could add 2,200 homes to the tiny village of Tusayan (population: 573), just south of the national park. The other is the Grand Canyon Escalade, a tram that would shuttle up to 10,000 visitors per day to the bottom of the canyon. In addition to the ski lift-like gondola, the Escalade project — which, at a billion dollars, will cost almost as much as

the Dallas Cowboys' lavish new stadium — includes shops, restaurants, boutique hotels, and a cultural center on 420 acres of remote scrubland overlooking the confluence of the Little Colorado and main-stem Colorado rivers, one of the most dramatic and (at least for now) remote areas of the canyon.

"In terms of the overall wilderness and the character of the Grand Canyon, the Escalade gondola is hands down the greatest threat in a generation," says Roger Clark of the Grand Canyon Trust, a local nonprofit dedicated to protecting the Colorado Plateau.

In addition to the Escalade and Tusayan developments, the north side of the canyon is being considered for mining uranium. Last year a court in Arizona upheld a 20-year ban on mining in a million acres near the park, but the National Mining Association appealed the ruling and a judge is now weighing lifting the ban, however unlikely that might be in the near term. And in 2012, new FAA regulations ushered in a crush of helicopter tours — up to 65,000 flights per year — that take off from Las Vegas and are allowed to fly as low as a thousand feet off the ground.

"The Grand Canyon has never been exposed to so many threats at one time," says Sinjin Eberle of American Rivers, a national nonprofit. "This should be one of the most protected places on Earth, and instead it's going up for sale to the highest bidder."

Considering all the threats, conservationists like Eberle are especially concerned about the Escalade development, which is planned for one of the remotest areas of the canyon. The developers behind it, a coalition of business interests called the Confluence Partners, say the area's pristine nature and dramatic vistas are precisely the reason they want to build there.

"Seeing the canyon from the floor is just as amazing as seeing it from the rim," says R. Lamar Whitmer, a politically connected former investment banker and the managing partner of Confluence Partners. "But the average visitor doesn't have the time to hike or ride a mule or spend the thousands of dollars for a river trip to see it from the bottom."

That's where the tram is supposed to come in. Like a gondola, it would whisk visitors to the bottom in about 10 minutes, where they could hike to the river's edge, eat at a restaurant at the junction, and take in a presentation at an amphitheater before the ride back up.

The land is owned by the Navajo Nation, and Whitmer and the Confluence Partners have enlisted the support of some tribal officials to back the project. Not surprisingly, the overall reaction in the Navajo community is less enthusiastic, with many upset that the confluence, which they consider hallowed territory, is being eyed for development.



"It's going into the heart of our sacred and special place," says Renae Yellowhorse, a Navajo elder who heads the Save the Confluence movement. "We need to stop this any way we can."

Navajo officials and the developers argue that the project will bring several thousand jobs, at an average salary of \$35,000 a year, and economic development to an area of the country that desperately needs it. But those economic prospects are overstated, say critics. "The local people are probably going to be stuck with low-level management jobs, in restaurants, or as hotel maids," Yellowhorse says.

Inevitably, the Escalade project gets compared with the success of the Skywalk — a horseshoe-shaped glass bridge, nicknamed the "toilet seat" by rafters, over the western rim of the Canyon — that's proved to be a tourist magnet, drawing more than 700,000 a year. But controversy has swirled around the project, with lawsuits entangling the developer who fronted the money and the Hualapi tribe, which owns the land. The tribal business that operates the Skywalk even declared bankruptcy before the lawsuits were finally settled out of court. Similar issues could plague the Escalade project.

Environmentalists' central concern is that the tens of thousands of additional tourists — for both the Escalade and Tusayan developments — will overburden what limited water is available in the region. The Colorado watershed has been enduring an ongoing drought, one so severe that it has occasionally dropped the water level of Lake Powell, upstream of the canyon, to record lows, threatening the flow of the river.

"Tusayan is in the middle of the desert, so these developments potentially affect groundwater all the way over to the canyon, which would be devastating," says Eberle. "Imagine waterfalls into the canyon drying up."

The National Park Service, not surprisingly, is opposed to both developments. But because the land is outside the park, there's not much they can do to scuttle the projects. Official approval for the Escalade project is almost entirely dependent on the Navajo Nation's elected council, and a vote could come as early as this spring, with construction beginning as soon as 2016.

The Grand Canyon will always attract tourists — nearly 5 million people visit the park each year. But by encouraging even more tourism through these developments, the Grand Canyon is in danger of losing its singular appeal.

"Ninety-eight percent of the canyon is this wonderfully untrammelled wilderness," says Clark. "You're out of the sights and sounds of the normal experience of most people, and that's a hugely valuable resource in a world where wilderness is getting more and more scarce." ■

## The Grandest Adventures

Three offbeat trips to ditch the canyon crowds.



### By Foot: The Remote North Rim

Ninety percent of the 5 million tourists who visit the Grand Canyon each year end up on the South Rim. Which means that the North Rim's Thunder River-Deer Creek Trail, a 30-mile loop that the Park Service calls "something close to canyon perfection," is almost always deserted. And the trail lives up to the billing. In addition to eluding the crowds, it

passes two of the most spectacular waterfalls in the canyon, Deer Creek and Thunder Spring, which after a rain roar like a fire hose from a cleft in the sandstone. To get top-to-bottom and back up again, you'll need three or four days — and a sturdy pair of hiking boots. But the reward is a night camped along the shores of the Colorado River and utter solitude for the entire trip. The trudge up to the rim is not for the unprepared: At 6,500 vertical feet, it's more than most 14ers. But the resulting high is a feeling you can get only from climbing out of the Grand Canyon all by yourself. —CHRISTOPHER KETCHAM



### By Car: The Big Loop

The Southwest's most epic road trip is a 600-mile jaunt around the entirety of the Grand Canyon, a route that conveniently hits Zion National Park, Grand Staircase-Escalante monument, Glen Canyon Dam, and Lake Havasu. Beginning and ending in Las Vegas, the trip will take about four days, and you'll have enough time to stop for hiking at the North Rim,

gawking at tourists at the South Rim, and a night at Amangiri resort, near Page, Arizona, where you can get a sky-deck room and sleep under the stars in the comfort of a king-size bed. Before heading back to Vegas via the Hoover Dam, turn off Highway 89 a few miles north of Flagstaff. There's an 800-foot-high volcano with a perfectly cylindrical cone and lava flow spilling out of its northern flank. Locally it's known as "Shit Pot Crater," and you can slide down its volcanic pebbles like snow. It's the sort of detour that makes sense only on a wayward road trip. —RYAN KROGH



### By Boat: The Mighty Colorado

Floating the 277-mile length of the canyon, the most dramatic way to experience its sandstone walls, takes about three weeks. But you don't need to quit your job to get the experience. OARS offers a seven-day guided trip that starts at Phantom Ranch, midway down the river, and covers nearly all the highlights, including 150-foot Deer Creek Falls, the turquoise waters of

the Little Colorado River, and the infamous Lava Falls rapid. To start the trip, you'll hike from the South Rim to the bottom of the canyon, where the dories, carrying a full kitchen and stocked bar, are waiting. Instead of 21 glorious days of beach camping, Dutch-oven feasting, and slot-canyon hiking, it's only seven. But with a trip-ending helicopter ride direct to Las Vegas, in no way does the shortened float lack in adrenaline. —KYLE DICKMAN





Baird and his dog, Wilson, had 30 square miles all to themselves.

# Man Versus Alaska

An engineer and his dog attempt to survive for a year on a frozen island teeming with bears.

by DAVID KUSHNER

**O**NE MORNING IN June 2012, Charles Baird, a 40-year-old former contracts writer at British Petroleum in Anchorage, chartered a boat for the two-hour ride to the island of Latouche in the Gulf of Alaska. The 12-mile-long, three-mile-wide spit of land had been abandoned since the 1930s, after the copper mines that served the needs of World War I closed. Baird planned to spend the next year alone on Latouche, bringing along thousands of pounds of food and gear; his three-and-a-half-year-old Labrador, Wilson; and an ornery brown goat named Thor that he bought on Craigslist and — if things went seriously sideways — intended to eat. He would text occasional updates to his older brother but would not be resupplied. All he had to do — all he wanted to do — was survive. “If this goes badly and I get hurt or killed, I’m OK with that,” he said shortly before the trip. “This is my passion.”

Growing up in Tampa, Baird often escaped to his backyard tree house, where he pored over adventure books such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Call It Courage*. While still a teenager, he ran a 37-mile

ultramarathon in which he found himself fascinated by the sensation of his body and mind breaking down — he remembers hallucinating luminescent dots and a phantom runner pacing him through the final stretch. He studied engineering at the Air Force Academy and so enjoyed the cadet survival missions that he spent a spring break wandering alone in the Colorado wilderness. After graduation, while working 12-hour days, seven days a week, on an oil rig off the coast of Texas, Baird decided to split for the greatest American wilderness of all. “It is the biggest and most extreme state and also a very inexpensive place to get land,” Baird says. “So I was like, ‘Yeah, I’m going to Alaska.’”

Almost as soon as Baird arrived, in 2008, he began plotting his adventure — stockpiling cash and honing his survivalist skills at a cabin he built in the woods outside Anchorage. He discovered Latouche in an online listing for remote empty lots and snatched up one and a half acres, sight unseen, on a hilly northwestern shore for \$8,000. It took him another three years to save up for all

the supplies he needed: 600 feet of rope, 500 feet of fishing line, five guns, and 4,799 matches, plus hand warmers and T-shirts, knit hats and deodorant, playing cards and antibiotics. After some internet research on diet requirements, he determined that he needed about 12 calories per day per pound of his body, no matter what the source. “It’s just calories,” he says. “You can eat Twinkies or rice and beans.” In total, he had to haul 5,900 pounds of supplies and 4,100 pounds of plywood up from the beach — a tough enough task without the incessant summer rain.

The torrent began shortly after his arrival in June, and it didn’t relent for his first 12 days there. He slept wrapped in a tarp in the mud of his property. Water penetrated everywhere. His feet went numb. Kamikaze mosquitoes devoured every piece of exposed skin and made his hands and ankles swell like tender hams. For Baird, the fear of failure, of having to quit and go home, was scarier than death. “That would just be embarrassing,” he says. But he had clearly underestimated the strain involved: “I just laid there and said, ‘This isn’t good.’”

COURTESY OF CHARLES A. BAIRD



Eventually, though, the rain stopped long enough for Baird to settle into a routine. He'd wake at eight, boil some water for coffee on his small propane burner, and cook up a pan of rice, powdered eggs, and Crisco. Sometimes, before starting work on his cabin, he gathered wood for a bonfire on the beach and heated seawater in a large black shrimp pot for his bath. At first, sponging himself off naked on the island's edge felt "savage and immodest," but he got over it. The flip side of loneliness here was that he could stand on a stunningly gorgeous bay under the Alaskan sun, completely nude, and not give a shit. "Thirty square miles to run free," Baird recalls thinking. "It's kind of nice."

**"LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD** use a paddle," Baird joked as I rafted to the rocky shoreline of Latouche early one wet and chilly morning in July 2012. I'd heard of Baird's adventure through a mutual friend and wanted to find out how he was faring. I'd had an unexpectedly dangerous journey, one that made me appreciate even more how far off the grid Baird had gone for his escape. The gulf's notorious weather assaulted our boat, leaving its three-person crew and me lost at sea overnight. I later learned another boat had flipped in the storm, drowning a passenger. When my captain finally found the island, 12 hours later, the motor on the dinghy that was supposed to get me to shore died. Now I was paddling in, using a rusty shovel.

Four weeks alone on Latouche had taken its toll on Baird as well. His long-sleeved green shirt and jeans hung loosely from his body as a result of the 33 pounds he'd shed from his 6-foot-1, 230-pound frame. He had a long red gash on his hand from accidentally leaning on his buck knife one night as he fell asleep. Scabby red bug bites covered his forehead under the brim of his damp brown hat. "I stopped using bug repellent after my first two weeks," he told me. "It's kind of a losing battle."

Despite the scars, Baird seemed upbeat as he showed me around his private bay. The beach was beautiful — rimmed by tall spruce trees and rolling hills — but also littered with the odd detritus of past homesteaders who had tried, and failed, to live here: an old busted radio from the Sixties, a rusty bulldozer. Later, hiking through a scratchy patch of woods, we came across the mangled blue and white fuselage of a downed airplane. Hoisting a dusty liquor bottle from the cockpit, Baird said, "Welcome to the island of broken dreams."

His unfinished cabin was just a bare wooden box measuring eight by 12 feet. As he hammered the walls, Baird would listen to songs in his mind — "Here I Go Again" by Whitesnake was a favorite — or hash



out ideas for science fiction novels. He had recently finished installing three sets of small windows and a white metal door. The inside felt like a slightly bigger version of the kind of tree house where Baird sought refuge as a kid. A customized street sign friends had given him at his goodbye party was hung outside: LATOUCHE ISLAND: POPULATION 1.

Baird showed me a cosine equation he'd scribbled on the wall to determine the slope of the roof. "My John Nash moment," he said, referring to the schizophrenic math professor played by Russell Crowe in the movie *A Beautiful Mind*. I wondered if an actual John Nash moment might await him once the interminable Alaskan winter set in. Back in Anchorage, Baird hung out with a tight circle of local bohemians and was accustomed to constantly checking email and Facebook. Enduring the physical demands of homesteading is one thing, but Baird was confronting a more contemporary challenge, too, the isolation of leaving behind the digital world. When I asked what his biggest fear was about this adventure, he said, "Being alone." Before I came to Latouche, one of his friends in Anchorage had told me, "My biggest fear is that he goes insane."

For now Baird had more pressing concerns. "I carry this gun if I see something I want to eat," he told me one morning, pulling his .380 from its holster. Then, pulling out his .44 Magnum, he added, "And I carry this one if something wants to eat me." During his early nights on the beach, he kept hearing rustling noises in the woods; he recalled wondering if a bear could smell him beneath the tarp. One afternoon at his cabin, as he fished a lollipop out of a bin, he pointed to a

Baird spent the warmer months exploring nature: collecting starfish, taking evening hikes, and photographing wildlife.



fresh pile of shit. "That's bear scat," he told me. "They know I'm here."

**AFTER I LEFT THE ISLAND,** I worried about the impact my visit might have had on him, whether my presence might tap free some reserve of unwanted loneliness. On Facebook he looked weathered, his face ruddier and increasingly consumed by a thickening beard. With the cabin built, his days were now filled with cutting and collecting firewood, a task made more difficult after he hurt his shoulder hauling a bin of logs. Simply lifting a coffee cup to his lips made him wince, but he had no time for rest.

The bears had finally come. The first appearance happened during a bonfire on the beach. Wilson was barking at something up by the camp. Baird wandered through the darkness, carrying his lantern, and saw nothing. But when he returned to the beach, there it was: a hulking black bear, shuffling across the nearby hillside. Baird reached for his gun but realized he had left it back at the cabin. Thankfully, the bear wandered off without incident. "Forgetting my gun was foolish and could have gotten me killed," he wrote in his journal a few days later. "It is not acceptable."



Baird figured the bears were attracted to the scent of Thor. “The time had come to eat the goat,” he wrote. On the morning of September 10, Baird walked him down to the beach. Wilson, who’d developed a friendship with Thor, let out a whimpering cry as Baird fastened together the animal’s hind legs and strung him up on the back of the bulldozer. Then Baird slit the goat’s throat. He later recalled, “I probably should have tied up the dog somewhere because she found the events confusing and disturbing.”

Baird was aware of something else at that moment, though: He had become a man alone, killing an animal to survive. Something primal was taking over, the thing he had come here to unleash. With Wilson barking wildly as blood pooled in the sand, Baird cut Thor down and dragged him farther down the beach to gut him, so as not to attract bears near his home. But at least one already had his number.

A large black bear in the icy blue water was wading toward the shore. Baird drew his .44, but Wilson had already bounded into the waves and was barking angrily at the bear. When it lumbered onto the beach, Wilson continued charging right up to the giant, which haltingly retreated into the thicket. “Good girl, Wilson!” Baird shouted.

For the rest of the evening, Baird sat with Wilson on the beach, roasting the goat over a bonfire. The heat from the flames was strong enough that Baird peeled off his damp shirt and tossed it aside, letting the smoke envelop him as he gnawed on the goat’s leg. It was, he says, “one of the most manly moments of my life.” He nailed the goat’s horns on the wall of his cabin as a reminder of how he felt that night, how far he had come, and how far he hoped to go.

**SNOW BEGAN FALLING** in October, and by February more than eight feet had accumulated around his cabin. Other than trudging 30 feet to his outhouse, he was spending the entire day indoors (with only a few hours of sunlight, it’s not like he was missing much). The propane stove, and the combination of his and Wilson’s body heat, kept the cabin about 15 degrees warmer than the outside temperature, which hovered around 30 degrees — still cold, but only occasionally dipping below freezing. He read a half-dozen books a week, including a lot of Sherlock Holmes and Stephen King’s eight-part *Dark Tower* series, and slept up to 15 hours a day. What he didn’t do much was eat — usually just once a day — or exercise, or bathe. He changed his underclothes most weeks and his shirt only after five months.

He still had his phone, with which he had been texting and, when the reception was strong enough, calling his family once



Only a few structures built by copper miners 100 years ago remain on Latouche.

**“I DID FEEL ISOLATED AND ANXIOUS. I FELT KIND OF DISCONNECTED FROM MYSELF.”**

a week. But as the weather worsened, so did his signal. In a last-ditch effort, Baird hiked two hours through the snow to the top of a mountain, the best spot he had discovered on the island to use his phone, and put his finger on the switch. He stood there on the hill, the modern-day homesteader, hoisting his last link to civilization into the sky, only to face inevitable disappointment: no service. Just a long walk back to his cabin to spend untold winter days and nights cut off, alone. “I did feel isolated and anxious,” he recalls. “I felt kind of disconnected from myself.”

He had nightmares of being back at the Air Force Academy, unprepared for some mission, and his emotions cycled through fits of laughter and somberness. “It really takes a few weeks to completely calm down,” he says. “It is something I had to learn to do.” He began playing games — like seeing how long he could hold his breath (more than three minutes after enough practice) — and talked a lot to Wilson. He wrote copious journal entries and science fiction stories about characters with telekinetic powers. Eventually he was able to relax, and settled more deeply into himself. “I just sat there calmly for months,” he says. “And really enjoyed it.”

As winter turned to spring, Baird emerged from his cabin with a new sense of ease that, he admits, sometimes bordered on stupidity. He roamed the island without his guns, the fear of bear attack strangely absent. He was also nearly out of food, eating just lentils

and rice and the occasional can of tuna. His shoulder still bothered him, and his hands had grown cramped with tendinitis. But he was amazed at how little he needed now. “I felt more relaxed and got into this bliss,” he says.

Before long it was June again, a year since his arrival, and Baird was back on the shore waiting for the same boat to pick him up. He’s not a sentimental guy (most of his possessions were left behind), but he couldn’t help watching from the stern as Latouche faded from view. “I felt overwhelmed,” he says. “It felt like home.” That afternoon, as he bit into a cheeseburger at a dive bar in Whittier, he realized just how long he’d been away.

Nearly two years later, Baird’s now working on film crews in Anchorage, and he recently finished a memoir about his time on Latouche. But he has yet to feel fully back in place. He finds little motivation in what he calls “normal societal expectations” — money, job, house. When he sees people arguing over trivial matters in a grocery store, they remind him of bears fighting on a beach. Even in Alaska, that primal part of himself he discovered doesn’t quite square with modern life. So he’s hatching plans for another adventure, perhaps to an island with an active volcano or somewhere deep in the interior. “I’d like to get away again,” he says. “Being alone and quiet is so foreign. But it is something I miss.” ■



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# STYLE & DESIGN

WHAT'S  
NEW



## ↑ The Slimmer Screen

While TV manufacturers fight for the highest resolution, contrast, and brightness, Sony is delivering a thinner screen. The 4K HD TVs in its new **XBR X900C Series** range from 55 to 75 inches, yet at just 0.2 inches thick, are slimmer than the company's smartphones. The effect is a frameless picture you can mount flat to a wall without sacrificing any resolution. *\$TBD; sony.com*



## The Reinvented Stovetop Pot →

Upscale coffee roaster Blue Bottle teamed with industrial designer Joey Roth to create a **Moka Pot** with a modern aesthetic — a ceramic chamber sits atop a steel base. It makes a cup that falls between French press and pour-over in intensity. *\$100; bluebottlecoffee.com*



## ← Better-Sounding Bluetooth

Bluetooth headphones usually sacrifice sound quality for portability, but the **Sennheiser Momentum On-Ear Wireless** pair noise cancellation with advanced signal processing for audio on par with traditional models. And, since you'll use these on the go, the stainless steel and suede band folds for easy carrying. *\$400; sennheiser.com*

## The Essential Camp Knife →

Handmade in Norway, the **Helle Algonquin's** curved handle of oak, birch, and red leather is inspired by Canada's Algonquin Provincial Park. Journeys there taught photographer Laura Bombier, the knife's designer, the importance of carrying a well-made blade. "My brothers and father never went anywhere without one," she says. The 2.7-inch triple-laminated stainless steel blade and leather sheath make this a worthy companion for your next adventure. *\$169; helle.no*



## The Wood-Fired Hot Tub ↑

Set up the **Welteevree Dutch tub** just about anywhere. A fire inside the steel coil heats 200 gallons of water in 2.5 hours, and you can raise or lower the coals to control the temp, says the company's North American agent, Todd Smith. *\$6,995; welteevree.us*



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# A More Capable Crossover

A venerable off-road brand builds a small sport ute without losing the plot. by **JESSE WILL**

**W**HEN IT'S NOT covered in ice, Kaldidalur Road is a gravel track that winds between two glaciers in Iceland's Thingvellir National Park. During winter, most who travel this eerie whiteout expanse do so from the backseat of a knobby-tired Super Jeep on a tourist excursion from Reykjavík. I'm driving it in something a bit tamer: Land Rover's new Discovery Sport, a crossover destined for the Garage Mahals of the American burbs. The Sport is Land Rover's entry-level model and will inevitably be disparaged as a "cute-ute" or "soft-roader," but out here in the Icelandic highlands, where the Sport picks apart the terrain like a mountain runner in crampons, those put-downs seem like a joke.

If the Discovery Sport looks familiar, there's a reason: It shares a platform with the Range Rover Evoque, which has been buttering the company's bread since 2011. But while that urbane five-seater hews toward luxury and looks, the Discovery Sport's

pitch is capability. Both share a two-liter, four-cylinder turbocharged engine and a nine-speed automatic that calls up smooth passing power. The mechanical differences are mostly in the rear end, where the Discovery Sport has a suspension intended for tougher stuff. Its multilink rear axle allows more than 13 inches of up-and-down wheel movement (more than Ford's Baja-ready Raptor) to crawl over uneven slickrock, navigate rutted access roads, or bound over a parking median to beat stadium traffic.

The Disco Sport's unflappable character comes from a high-tech terrain-response system, which adjusts throttle response, stability control, and other factors, and doles out torque to whichever wheels will keep it stable given the conditions. The more you use the terrain-response system, the more you come to trust it: During sketchy sections you feel well within the car's mechanical limits and look down to find yourself shocked by the speedometer.

Although it starts at roughly half the price of the brand's rough-luxe leader, the Range Rover, the Sport still has more off-road potential than most of its buyers will ever use. Land Rover claims it can plow through up to two feet of water without damage, twice the Mercedes GLK's rating.

Land Rover shares R&D costs with Jaguar, and the Sport is the start of a tech push for the company. An eight-inch nav touchscreen can bread-crumbs your path when you go off-road; you can opt for cameras that read speed limit signs and collision-detecting braking. And despite all that rugged posturing, the Sport is loaded with features any mall transport could aspire to. The rear seats flip down to make nearly 60 feet of cubic storage, and unlike with any of its competitors, you can opt for a third row with two pop-up seats. Each of the six passengers gets an air vent and his or her own charging port, ensuring powered iPads and Candy Crushing for all — for those times when there aren't any glaciers to look at. ■

The Discovery Sport starts at \$37,995.





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# FOOD & DRINK



## Perfect Steak Indoors

Grill marks look good, but the best steak you'll ever cook may come from the frying pan. **by FRANCIS LAM**

**F**OR MOST PEOPLE, the platonic ideal of a steak involves a hot, smoky grill — the elemental meeting of fire and meat. But some of the best steaks you'll ever have will come out of a frying pan. The difference is in the crust. Most grilled steaks, when seared over extremely hot coals or gas burners, take

on the intense flavor of the black-charred grill marks. But a hot pan distributes heat evenly over the surface of the steak, letting you get a rich, deeply flavored crust. Instead of charring it, pan-searing caramelizes the meat, locking in the juices. Here's how to make your next steak the best one you've ever had.

### GRASS VS. GRAIN FED

Today you can find grass-fed beef — a USDA label certifying that an animal has eaten only grass and forage — at most grocery stores. But it can cost as much as \$10 more per pound than grain-fed. Here's why it's worth it: The meat has a more robust flavor. Its health benefits are generally considered superior — more heart-healthy omega-3s, more essential vitamins and minerals, and fewer saturated fats. Plus, it has few or no growth hormones or antibiotics. Just be sure to cook it rarer than usual, as it's much leaner.

### PAN-SEARED STEAK

1 lb strip, rib eye, or porterhouse steak  
Peanut or vegetable oil (avoid olive oil; it has a lower smoking point, causing a burned flavor)  
3 tbsp butter, cut into chunks  
2 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled (optional)  
4 sprigs fresh thyme (optional)

#### 1. Salt and Pepper the Meat

Then set it on a wire rack and place it uncovered in the fridge. Ideally, do this 12 hours before cooking, so the salt is absorbed, locking in the internal juices. But even an hour will help.

#### 2. Take It Out of the Fridge

Let the meat sit out for an hour, so it comes to room temperature. This ensures that the outer areas don't overcook while you're waiting for the interior to heat up.

#### 3. Sear Each Side Quickly

Set a heavy pan (cast iron is preferable) over high heat for five minutes. Coat it with oil, then lay the steak in the pan and cook for one minute. Flip the steak — it should be light golden — and sear the other side for one minute. A little smoke is unavoidable, but using a splatter screen will reduce most of the mess.

#### 4. Flip It Every 30 Seconds

It's a little unorthodox, but this develops a deep-brown crust and lets the steak cook through evenly.

#### 5. Baste It in Butter

When the steak is nearly done — about five minutes for medium rare — add the butter, garlic, and thyme. Tilt the pan and continuously spoon the butter on top of the steak for a minute or two, until the butter browns.

#### 6. Let It Rest Before Serving

Cutting the steak too soon will cause the juices to leak out. Let it sit for five minutes, then serve with the butter drippings. ■





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# The Tiki Revival

Big drinks with little umbrellas are back. by **ST. JOHN FRIZELL**

**IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER NOW**, but tiki bars, those kitschy, luau-themed lounges pervasive in lower-latitude beach towns, were the Umami Burger of their day. By the 1960s, the two rival California bars that started the hoopla — Trader Vic's and Don the Beachcomber — had outposts all over the world, from Minnesota to Munich. And the drinks were good. Damn good. The mainly rum-based cocktails had evocative names like the Scorpion Bowl and the Zombie. They were defined by the exotic mugs that bartenders served them in, as well as by their over-the-top garnishes: flowers, umbrellas, pineapple leaves, even fire. "They were a little escape, a mini-vacation," says Jeff "Beachbum" Berry, author of *Beachbum*

*Berry's Sippin' Safari* and *Potions of the Caribbean*, who has become the world's foremost tiki archaeologist. "They were places where you could shut out the world and just drift for a few hours."

Today, a wave of new high-profile tiki bars such as Chicago's Three Dots and a Dash, San Francisco's Smuggler's Cove, and Berry's Latitude 29, in New Orleans, are breathing new life into the once-forgotten drinks. And the new concoctions are a far cry from the sickly sweet cocktails that took over in the Seventies and gave the style a bad rap. When made properly, tiki drinks are delicious, as the recipes below demonstrate. All you'll need to add is some ukulele music and a giant straw, and you can close your eyes and just drift.

## THE ORIGINAL MAI TAI

1 oz light Jamaican rum (such as Appleton Estate Reserve)  
1 oz dark Martinique rum (such as Rhum Clément VSOP)  
1 oz fresh lime juice  
½ oz curaçao

¼ oz orgeat (almond syrup)  
¼ oz simple syrup

Shake together all ingredients with ice, then strain into an ice-filled old-fashioned glass. Garnish with a lime wedge and mint sprig.

**Tiki Glasses:** Without them, the drinks just aren't the same. Retroplanet.com has a great selection.

**Don't Skip the Orgeat:** It's an almond-flavored syrup — and no Mai Tai is complete without it.

## GUNGA DIN

2 oz gin (preferably Cadenhead's Old Raj)  
3 cardamom pods  
1 oz fresh pineapple juice  
¾ oz fresh lime juice  
¾ oz simple syrup  
Q tonic

Muddle gin and cardamom pods in a shaker. Add juices and simple syrup, shake over ice, and strain into a mug filled with ice. Top with tonic; garnish with a few pineapple leaves.

## JUNGLE BIRD

2 oz dark rum (such as Cruzan Black Strap)  
4 oz pineapple juice  
¾ oz Campari  
½ oz lime juice  
½ oz simple syrup

Shake ingredients; pour unstrained into a tall tiki mug. Garnish with an orange wheel, a pineapple leaf, and a cocktail umbrella.

**Fresh Pineapple Juice Is Key:** Remove the rind and run the fruit through a blender, then strain.

DRINK STYLING BY ED GABRIELS FOR HALLEY RESOURCES





NAUTICA



## SPORTS

## Running Wild

Christopher McDougall uncovers the ancient power of training outside.

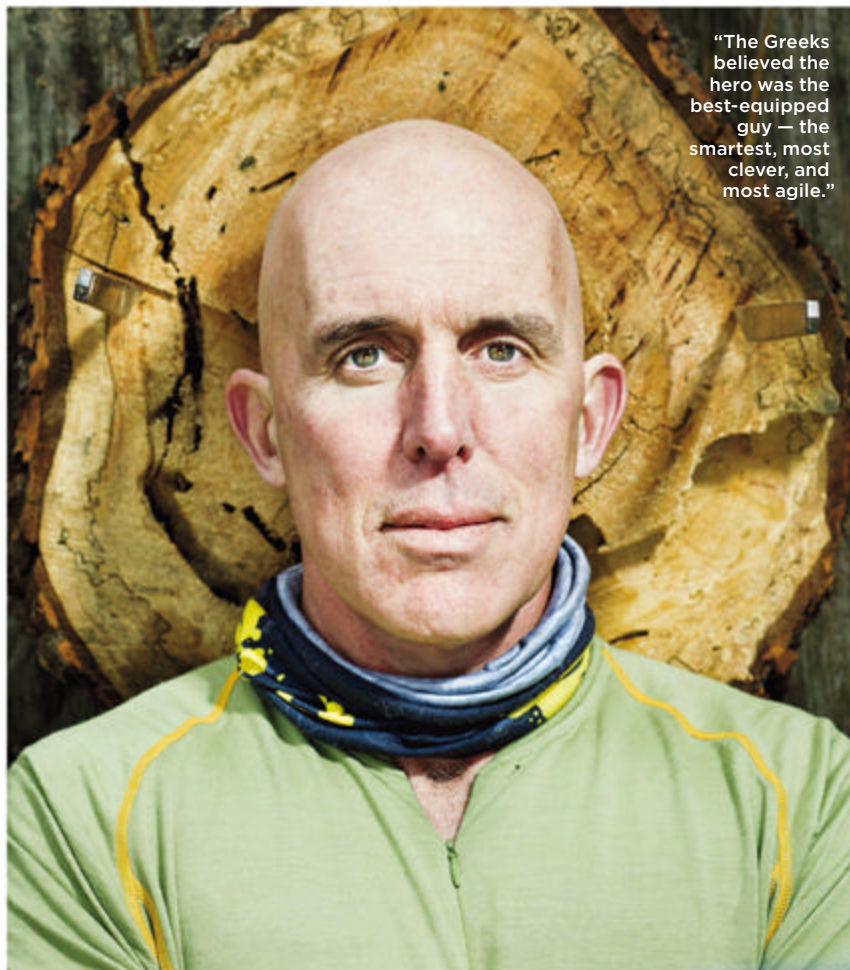
by DAVID BROWNE

**I**N HIS 2009 BESTSELLER, *Born to Run*, Christopher McDougall wrote about a tribe of extreme runners, deep in the Copper Canyon of northwest Mexico, who showed the world the forgotten benefits of barefoot running. In his new book, *Natural Born Heroes*, McDougall unearths another band of extreme athletes, this time in the Mediterranean during the Second World War. In 1941, an unlikely strike force of intellectuals from Britain and shepherders from Greece kidnapped a Nazi general on the then-German-occupied island of Crete. They spent the next month evading Hitler's troops, turning the island into one big playground: running, climbing, and vaulting around the rocky hillsides. "There was an entire tradition of phenomenal indigenous runners," McDougall says. "I thought, 'How did those guys do it?'"

With the help of a local guide, he retraced the fighters' escape route in Crete, attempting to move across the natural landscape as they did. "I realized we've forgotten about mobility," McDougall says. "It makes sense for gyms to have people in one place, moving from one exercise to another, but what's lost is that humans by nature are random in their movements." His wide-ranging research explores everything from notions of heroism in ancient Greece to the undervalued strength of the body's connective tissue known as fascia. "We're now in a world of gigantic X-Men superheroes," says McDougall. "But the Greeks didn't believe that the hero was the toughest guy in the room. He was the best-equipped guy — the smartest, most clever, and most agile."

#### What was so heroic about the kidnapping of the German general?

World War II warfare was about weapons and blood. And here you have these guys, not soldiers but old-fart British academics. The only reason they're there is that they happen to speak ancient Greek. And they say: "Instead of killing another person, let's make that person disappear. Let's do a magic act. Let's baffle the shit out of Hitler."



"The Greeks believed the hero was the best-equipped guy — the smartest, most clever, and most agile."

#### How did they outwit the Nazis?

It's the whole concept of ancestral fitness — the ancient Greek messengers were living off the land and foraging for wild greens that have far more caloric punch than processed foods. These guys had pissed-off Germans on their tails on a very small island. They had to grab food and rest when they could and constantly move.

#### What role did parkour play?

It is now seen as something dreamed up in France in the '80s. But it's the same natural genius reappearing again and again. It's the idea that humans can dominate the landscape.

#### You took a pretty bad fall coming down Mount Ida.

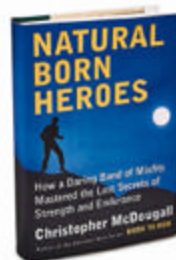
It's one of those things where you learn by fucking up. I took a spill and started sliding down the mountain. It wakes you up.

#### What's the deal with fascia?

Your entire body is webbed with connective tissue called fascia, from your toes to the top of your head. It's sensory: It picks up information and responds to it. When you watch rock climbers do amazing things, that's not muscle — that's fascia.

#### How has writing this book changed your approach to fitness?

If I go for a run and it gets too comfortable, something's wrong. The other day I was on a run, and the road was icy. I felt myself slowing down and taking my time. Then I saw a creek next to the road, and I charged into it for a quarter mile. There was a moment when I thought, "This is a fucking mistake," but it wasn't that cold and it was exhilarating. You suddenly feel way more capable than you did a few minutes earlier. Now I feel unstoppable. ■







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# The NBA's China Connection

How a 29-year-old sports agent lures top American talent to the Chinese Basketball Association. by **BEN SIN**

**A** DAY BEFORE THE NBA SEASON tipped off in October, the Boston Celtics cut their backup point guard, Will Bynum, to free up salary space. The previous season, Bynum had averaged a respectable nine points and four assists a game for the Detroit Pistons, and it seemed likely that he'd land another gig coming off the bench in the NBA. But his agent, Reggie Brown, had another idea: China. "Their season is only three months," Brown says of the Chinese Basketball Association's 38-game schedule. "And the pay is comparable to what he'd get here." Bynum wasn't convinced. "It was an opportunity for me to play the game I love," Bynum says, but

the prospect of moving 7,000 miles across the globe unnerved the 32-year-old Chicago native. "Don't worry," Brown told him. "I know a guy."

The guy in China is a lanky 29-year-old Wisconsin native named Matt Beyer. As China's only licensed Western sports agent, Beyer holds the keys to an increasingly lucrative revolving door between the NBA and the CBA. Stateside players unable to make the pros, or fighting for a last gasp in the twilight of their careers, rely on him to arrange every aspect of their transition to China — from negotiating contracts to arranging visits for family and friends. "We really provide a full service," Beyer says.

The NBA began broadcasting in China, where an estimated 300 million people play basketball, in 1987, but China didn't have a professional league until 1995. Foreign players weren't allowed until an opening season that saw just three dunks convinced team owners they needed to recruit better talent abroad. Cyril White, a point guard at Texas Lutheran University in the early Nineties, was one of the first American players to make the jump. "The living conditions in China were not really up to par," he says. "The beds were rock hard, and the toilets in most cities were really just a hole in the ground."

That same year, a 10-year-old Beyer traveled with his parents from their home in Wisconsin to an orphanage in China, where they adopted a boy and a girl. After graduating from high school in 2003, Beyer intended to major in Chinese at college. "But that summer I thought, 'Why not learn it in China?'" he says. He moved to Xi'an, in the northwest part of the country, took courses during the day, and partied a lot at night. "I loved it here from day one," he says. "And that never changed." When he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin two years later, he could speak and write Chinese fluently.

During Beyer's junior year, the Milwaukee Bucks drafted Yi Jianlian — thought to be the second coming of Yao Ming — with the sixth pick in the 2007 draft. "I knew Yi would need a translator," Beyer says. "So I pestered the team every day with cold calls and emails offering my services, and they eventually hired me." The Bucks traded Yi to the Nets a year later, but Beyer saw a bigger opportunity in managing American players in China. "They perform well on the court," he says. "But nobody here was really helping them adjust off the court." The needs of his players are often as basic as finding food. "The first time a player sees cow intestine or a chopped chicken head on a plate," Beyer says, "it's always a shock."

To get his license in 2011, Beyer passed an eight-hour exam, conducted in Chinese, on the rules and regulations that govern professional sports in China — the only non-native speaker ever to do so. That same year, the NBA season was suspended as players and owners renegotiated the collective bargaining agreement. "The lockout was a big game changer," Beyer says. "That was when I saw all these American guys were willing to come to China."

The CBA's profile has only continued to grow. One of the biggest flameouts in NBA history, Stephon Marbury, is now a legend in Beijing, where he's won two championships for the Ducks, headlined a biographical musical, and had a bronze statue built in his honor. This past season, Metta World Peace was a Sichuan Blue Whale, and Delonte



West suited up for the Shanghai Sharks. At the same time, an increasing number of current NBA players, like the Phoenix Suns' sixth man, Gerald Green, and the Chicago Bulls' backup point guard, Aaron Brooks, have charted a path back to the league by way of China. "China has always wanted American players," Brown says. "Now more and more players are interested in China."

Much of that action passes through Beyer. Of the 56 Americans playing in China (each team is allowed only two), Beyer imported 11. He gets 5 percent of the salaries he negotiates for his clients. The average pay for non-Chinese players is about \$500,000; the biggest names make more than a million. "It's pretty lucrative," Beyer says.

This season, Beyer signed one of the most heavily touted American transplants in history. Emmanuel Mudiay, a freakishly athletic 19-year-old point guard from Dallas, initially committed to Southern Methodist University before signing a \$1.2 million contract with the Guangdong Southern Tigers. "Emmanuel decided he wanted to explore professional options rather than the NCAA," Beyer explains. "So his people in the U.S. contacted me."

Mudiay is expected to be a top pick in the coming NBA draft and could open the door for other "one-and-done" prospects to skip college in favor of well-paid employment in China. That is a very profitable scenario for Beyer, but he says Mudiay, who spent his early childhood in the Democratic Re-



Bynum found stardom after Beyer (below) helped bring him to the Guangdong Tigers.

public of Congo, was uniquely prepared for the cultural change. "He's one of the most mature teenagers I've ever met," Beyer says. "He's very serious about training, and he's very serious about life off the court."

In December, Mudiay injured his ankle, and the team asked for another American point guard. That's when Beyer snagged Bynum, who went on to win his first 22 games in the CBA. "Everybody's embraced me," Bynum says. "It's been an easy transition."

Bynum lives in an upscale hotel owned by the team and spends his downtime playing PlayStation (Beyer's office bought it for him). One of his new teammates taught him how to use chopsticks. "A lot of NBA players have been asking me what it's like here," Bynum says. "I basically do the same



things in China I do at home: work out, eat well, and play basketball." Beyer's office organized his wife's visit over Christmas, and Bynum Skypes with his two kids every night. "I miss my family, but it's a sacrifice you make to have a career," says Bynum. "Home is on the court." ■

## Made in China

Four top NBA players who launched their careers in the CBA.



**WILSON CHANDLER**  
Denver Nuggets

**CBA team:** Zhejiang Lions

**CBA season highlights:**

During the 2011 NBA lockout, Chandler was the first NBA player to sign a deal in China. In his first game, he dropped 43 points and grabbed 22 rebounds. He led his squad to the play-offs before re-signing with the Denver Nuggets.



**GERALD GREEN**  
Phoenix Suns

**CBA team:** Foshan Dralions

**CBA season highlights:** After a disappointing early career with the Boston Celtics, the 2007 NBA slam-dunk champion spent a brief stint in the CBA in 2011. Although he returned to the U.S. after only a month, he left behind a YouTube treasure trove of monster dunks.



**AARON BROOKS**  
Chicago Bulls

**CBA team:** Guangdong Tigers

**CBA season highlights:**

Brooks also opted to go abroad during the lockout, when he played alongside Yi Jianlian, the 7-footer for whom Beyer interpreted in Milwaukee. Brooks was an All-Star and averaged 30 points per game in the Finals but fell short to Marbury's Ducks.



**CHRIS ANDERSEN**  
Miami Heat

**CBA team:** Jiangsu Dragons

**CBA season highlights:** After just one year of junior college, Birdman played his first season of pro basketball in China in 1999. A year later, he was the first pick in the inaugural Developmental League draft, and then signed his rookie deal with the Nuggets a month later.



# TRIBUTE

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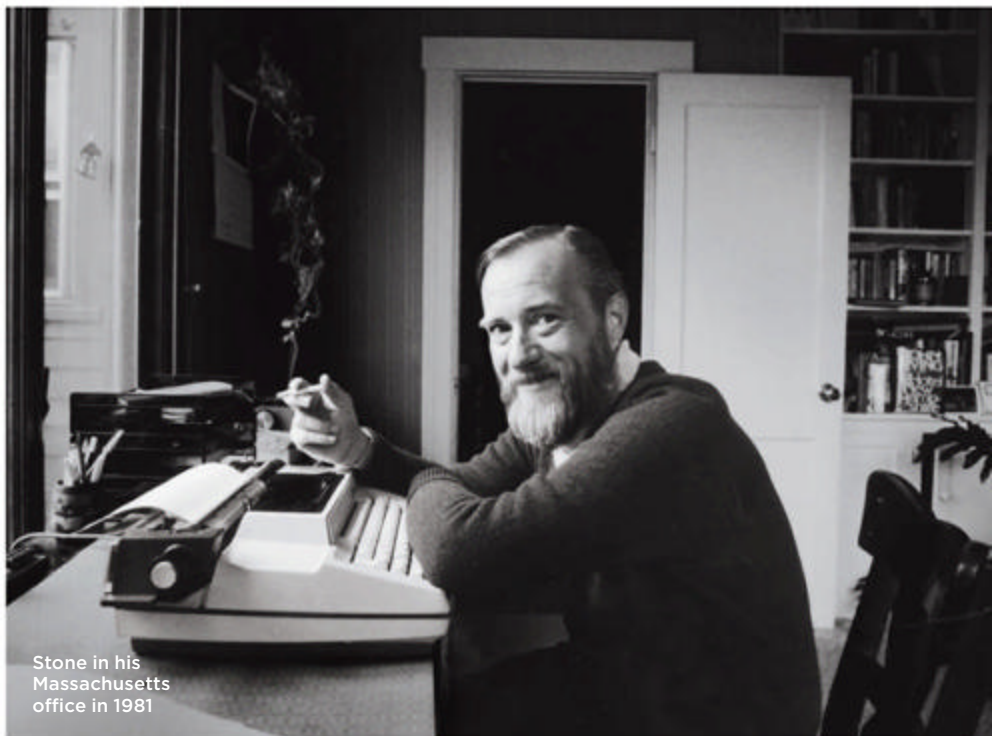
## Robert Stone

The novelist, who ran with sailors, Pranksters, and literary legends, had a deep read on the underbelly of the American male.

by **WALTER KIRN**

**R**OBERT STONE, the superb American novelist and chronicler of the Perpetual Apocalypse who died in January at 77, never played the major-male-writer game. Unlike the Mailers of the world, he didn't flaunt his thoughts on the Big Question or lead a public love life, and unlike Salinger and Pynchon, he didn't cultivate genius-style seclusion. To his readers and fellow writers, he was a somewhat faceless master mason who published infrequently and monumentally, as though on a private astrological cycle synced to the culture's deeper waveforms. To me, for whom he was an idol (and remained one even after we met in person, which doesn't often happen with one's heroes), he was a channel of legendary energies. He'd cavorted with Kerouac and Kesey in his youth and puffed on the same long pipe of myth and vision lit by Whitman and Melville way back when.

As it happened, the week before he passed away I had reread *Dog Soldiers*, his best-known novel, published in 1974 and annually ripped off and reworked by every tough-guy subterranean since. It's the tale of a misbegotten heroin deal that starts in buggy wartime Vietnam and climaxes with a psychedelic shoot-out somewhere in the lonesome John Ford desert. Its ship-of-fools cast is typical of Stone, thrusting together twitchy desperadoes, mournful contemplatives, moon-eyed zombies, and suavely lethal agents of the System. It moves like noir, with oiled inevitability, but carries a weighty philosophical load. Its subject, as was ever the case with Stone, is America, us, Goliath with a gun, Bible-drunk lawgiver to the whole known universe. The characters are men of action set in motion by some collective momentum beyond their power to fathom or direct. The unlucky ones get out alive, while the fortunate rest are plowed back into the soil. They're sure to return, though, because Stone's America is nothing if not cyclical and karmic. With each turn of the big guilty wheel, we all swap souls.



Stone in his Massachusetts office in 1981

In 2007, a couple of years after our only meeting, I read and reviewed *Prime Green*, his memoir, from which I learned the outline of his story. Raised Roman Catholic in New York City. Troubled mother. Absent father. Poor. Ran off to join the Navy in his late teens and kept a copy of *On the Road* stashed in his seabag. Drifted to New Orleans when he got out, and sold encyclopedias door-to-door. Then, in the early Sixties, California. Acid under the redwoods. A writing fellowship. Out of it came his first novel, *A Hall of Mirrors*, the tale of a small-time DJ in the Deep South who falls in with a crew of rancid bigots bent on inciting racial Armageddon. Next stop, Hollywood, that golden tar pit where young writers tend to founder and leave their bones. Stone crawled to safety, though, and poured his bitterness into *Children of Light*, a novel of gothic self-loathing whose schizoid, druggy film-star heroine has sex on a pile of pig manure.

His characters tend to be seized by strong beliefs that carry them off toward madness and destruction. In *Outerbridge Reach*, Owen Browne, an upstanding ad writer living a decent middle-class life, is seized by a vision of stoic self-reliance that sends him off on a one-man sailing voyage that takes him to the spiritual brink. In *Dog Soldiers*, Dieter, a trippy guru figure who may be partly based on Ken Kesey, converts his fondness for chemical transcendence into a magic-

**DOG SOLDIERS' SUBJECT, AS EVER IT WAS WITH STONE, IS AMERICA, US, GOLIATH WITH A GUN.**

mushroom nature cult. Then there is Hicks, the hunted heroin smuggler who practices a form of Zen derived from his own numbness and detachment. At the end of the novel, bleeding from a bullet wound but vowing to press on, he trudges toward death down an endless railroad track, his useless cargo of Asian opiates still strapped across his broad American back. To keep up his spirits he pictures a blue triangle containing a red circle that holds his pain. The circle grows larger as he stumbles forward, eventually expanding to include the suffering of the entire foolish world. It's a delusion, of course, and grandiose, but it's one that great artists understand.

"He recalled that the pack was what he wanted so he would have to carry it. Serious people existed in order to want things, and to carry them."

Now it's our turn to carry what Stone set down. The load is a heavy one, but he bore it with grace, and it belongs to us all now, to all who labor. ■



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# Health & Fitness

FIGHTING A HIDDEN KILLER + LAIRD + DR. BOB + HEALTH NEWS

## Fighting a Hidden Killer

Right now you could be at war with persistent low-grade inflammation, a condition that often goes undiagnosed but wreaks havoc on the body. Here's what you can do.

by JOSEPH HOOPER

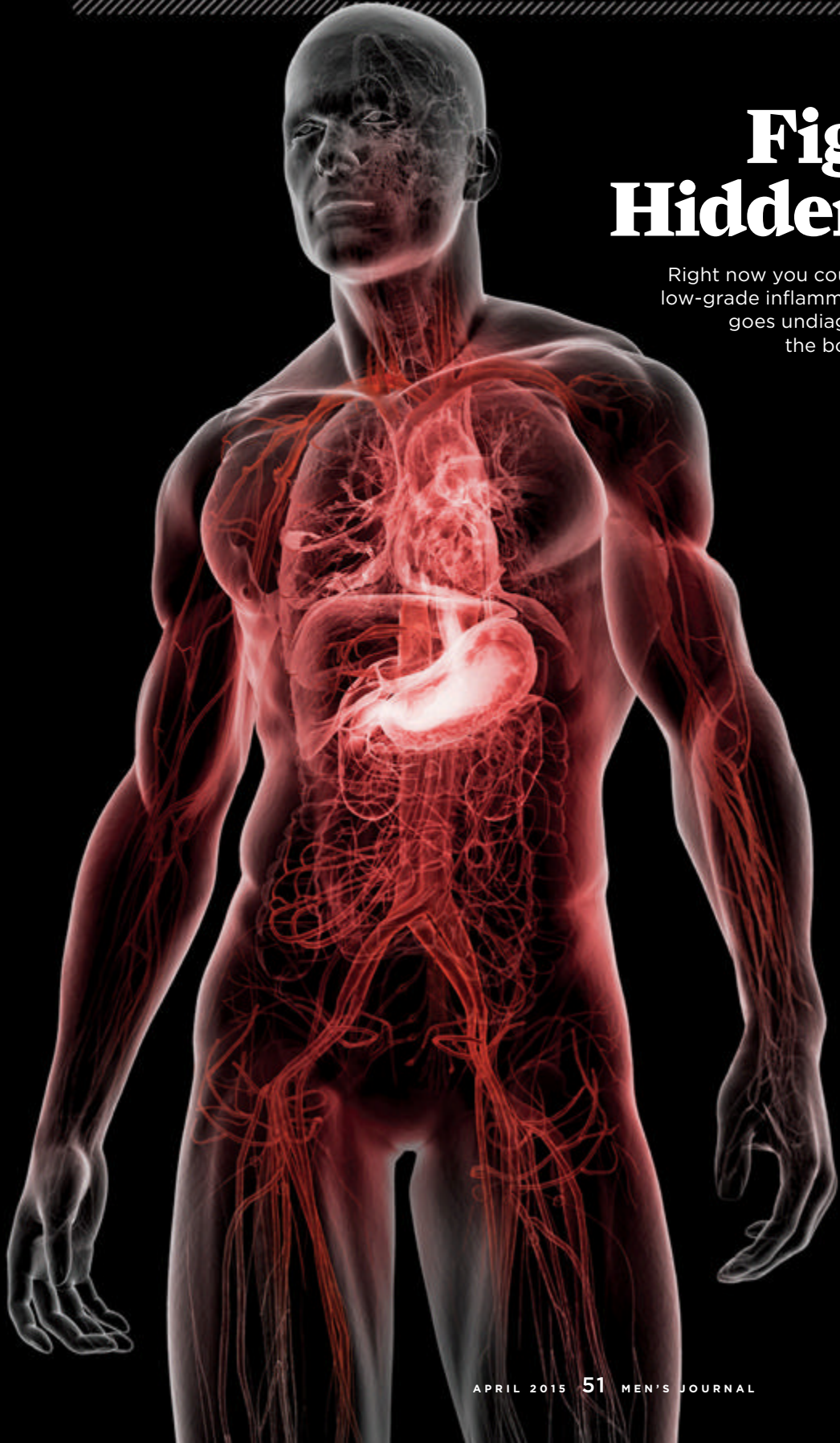


### CANCER. STROKE.

Alzheimer's. Heart disease. Depression.

What do all these conditions have in common? They've been linked to chronic inflammation. It seems impossible that one thing can be responsible for so many problems. But a growing body of medical research is revealing that inflammation — not the kind you get when you sprain an ankle, but the long-term, systemic inflammation that occurs when your immune system goes into overdrive, sending out cells that attack healthy tissues along with the unhealthy — may be at the root of many of our most prevalent diseases. The science also suggests that much of what we thought we knew about chronic inflammation, from why it increases as we age to where it begins in our bodies, and even what kind of drugs fight it, could be wrong.

At the same time, we're learning more about how to combat chronic inflammation with just a handful of simple lifestyle and diet steps that can lower your risk of future diseases. And once people begin taking them, most see positive effects almost immediately, says New York City physician Joseph

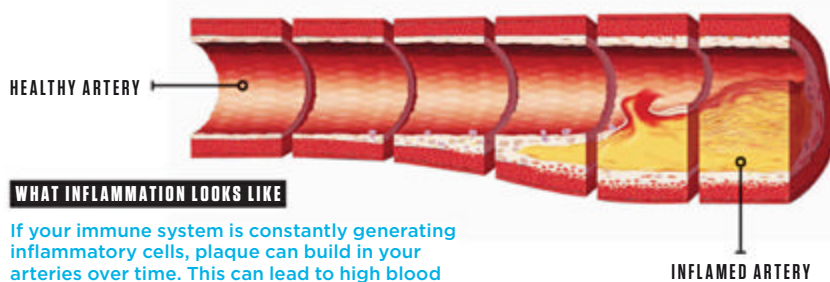




Raffaele. “Mood is often lifted when you get inflammation under control, you’re not chronically tired, you have less indigestion, you’re able to really progress in workouts, even headaches can go away,” says Raffaele. “Those changes in your body can just make you feel generally better.”

So what *is* inflammation? In simplest terms, it’s the body’s first line of defense against injury or infection. But our immune system has two kinds of inflammatory responses: acute and chronic. The former kicks in to protect us if we get hurt or fall ill; the latter drags us down as we get older, helping to usher in that host of dangerous, even life-threatening diseases.

To understand how our immune system can turn on us, it’s best first to have a clear picture of what happens during the acute phase. Back to that sprained ankle. When the body senses the sprain, the immune system immediately sends out a team of first-responder chemicals called cytokines; they prompt the body to wall off the affected area. Damaged cells flow out, oxygen and nutrients flow in, and healing begins. If there’s infection (maybe you scraped your foot in the same accident and some nasty bacteria crept in), the system will create antibodies to fight it. If the inflammatory response gets too enthusiastic, we rein it in: ice for the swelling that follows a sprain; aspirin for the fever that spikes too high. Usually in a matter of days or weeks, the body has cleaned up the damage and life goes back to normal.



**WHAT INFLAMMATION LOOKS LIKE**

**If your immune system is constantly generating inflammatory cells, plaque can build in your arteries over time. This can lead to high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease.**

Chronic inflammation occurs when the immune system continuously pumps out the cytokines. The chemicals keep circulating in our bodies, causing tissues to be constantly inflamed. This happens more and more as we age, a team of European researchers discovered during a study a year and a half ago. The researchers looked at the blood work from more than 3,000 middle-aged British civil servants during a 10-year period and found that those with high levels of inflammation had one and a half times the odds of having a cardiovascular problem such as heart disease and were 50 percent more likely to have died from a major chronic disease. That’s because as we age our immune systems go downhill with us, giving us an ever-smaller reservoir of capable cells to respond to an increasing amount of damage inside the body and tissues growing old. It’s a sad story. The body is hurting itself by trying to fix problems that it can’t.

The prime example of this is the heart. Over time, the cells in our coronary arteries

get banged up from the constant pounding of pumping blood. Little cracks form. The body interprets these cracks as wounds that need healing, and, signaled by the cytokines, the immune system sends cells to repair the damage. But in the narrow confines of the arteries, these cells just make the problem worse, setting in motion the creation of plaques that can cause heart attacks.

Christiaan Leeuwenburgh, chief of the division of biology of aging at the University of Florida, explains that our aging cells have a nasty habit of turning senescent, which means they’re no longer capable of doing their jobs and they begin spitting out their own inflammatory chemicals. Consider it a farewell “screw you” to the body. “Fat cells are the real culprits,” Leeuwenburgh says. Even before they become senescent, some fat cells will secrete hormones called adipokines, contributing to bodywide inflammation, and with age they only get crankier. These adipokines can, for instance, push the body

## DO YOU HAVE SYSTEMIC INFLAMMATION?

### Six ways to assess your risk.

**You put on five pounds**

Even going up a few pounds causes enlarged fat cells to secrete inflammatory adipokines throughout your body. What’s more, that fat likely went to your gut, and belly fat generates its own class of inflammatory cytokines. That’s why one of the biggest steps you can take to tamp inflammation is to keep the scale steady, says Dr. Joseph Raffaele.

**You have gut issues**

Constant digestive distress and acid reflux

are signals that your gut is inflamed, which can cause a laundry list of problems beyond the gut walls — constant fatigue, brain fog, low energy, irritability.

**You can’t get fitter**

If you’ve been pushing hard in the gym but seeing fewer results and feeling more fatigued, you may be experiencing the cellular exhaustion of overtraining, which promotes chronic inflammation. You want to do short bursts of intense exercise instead of long, tough workouts.

Doing intervals creates muscles and bones better able to fight chronic inflammatory diseases like sarcopenia (muscle wasting) and osteoporosis (bone thinning). Do a 20-minute cardio interval routine — go all out for a minute, then recover for a minute, and repeat — twice a week.

**You regularly sleep less than six hours a night**

Sleep is the body’s preferred time to recover from the cell oxidative stress that leads to inflammation.

“Getting less than six hours a night is equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes a day for developing heart disease and cancer,” says Dr. Kerry Kuehl, director of the Human Performance Laboratory at Oregon Health and Science University.

**You wake up stressed**

Everyone has a hectic day or two. The red flag goes up if you’re rolling out of bed already feeling tense from constant stress at work or home. This level of anxiety depletes a large

amount of the hormone cortisol, leaving little left to help regulate your immune system and keep inflammation down. “Stress is the big one — it affects the body profoundly,” says UCLA gastroenterologist Kirsten Tillisch.

**Still unsure? Get tested**

For a hard number on your inflammation level, ask your doctor for a high-sensitivity C-reactive protein test (hs-CRP) to measure inflammatory cells in your blood. It’s in the \$17 to \$71 range.



to store more fat. This leads to weight gain and puts us on the path to type 2 diabetes. In fact, many experts believe that as few as five surplus pounds spell trouble, even for those who exercise regularly.

While we know that some amount of chronic inflammation is inevitable with age, we can help influence how much we have by the lifestyle choices we make (see “Do You Have Systemic Inflammation?” and “The Anti-Inflammation Diet”). Again, the heart is a great example. Wear and tear in the pipes is inevitable, but the lower we can keep our resting heart rate and blood pressure, the fewer cracks there will be and the fewer cells called in for that quick and dirty repair job.

According to new thinking, there's one place you should focus on first when making changes. “The most common cause of chronic inflammation is probably the gut,” Manhattan integrative physician Frank Lipman says. This idea of gut inflammation entered the medical mainstream thanks in good measure to Massachusetts General gastroenterologist Alessio Fasano, who made a convincing case 15 years ago that sensitivity to a common food protein found in wheat and other grains — gluten — can turn the gut “leaky.” The theory: Gluten causes the lining of the gut wall to grow porous, creating microscopic leakage into the bloodstream and lymph system, which in turn triggers a systemwide inflammatory response. The cytokines go on a rampage, setting off symptoms from anxiety and fatigue to skin irritations and insulin resistance.

A host of common things can eat away at the all-important gut lining, says prominent UCLA gastroenterologist Kirsten Tillisch: too much stress and alcohol, processed foods, excessive exercise, and overexposure to antibiotics and common NSAID drugs like aspirin and ibuprofen. That anti-inflammatories made the list may seem incredible — after all, these drugs are designed to ease acute inflammation when we bang up muscles or joints. The problem? “It’s easy for people to take them like candy,” says Tillisch. Using NSAIDs to treat every ache and pain can rip the stomach lining and gastrointestinal tract, contributing to chronic inflammation, explains Tillisch. “I try to get patients off them just like any medicines that people don’t need. I say, ‘I know it feels better now, but in the long run you’re actually causing more inflammation.’”

A body on inflammatory high simmer can cause problems anywhere, including the mind. The current hot theory is that depression may be caused by cytokine-driven inflammation in the brain. This January, a study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* found that people with clinical depression had levels of brain inflammation 30 percent higher than

## WHAT TO DO

# THE ANTI-INFLAMMATION DIET

A simple approach to keeping your immune system in check.

### Vary your vegetables

So you have a daily spinach omelet for breakfast and a kale salad at lunchtime? That’s good but not great, according to new research. People who eat more than 25 species of plants a week have a greater diversity of bacteria in their guts than those who eat fewer than 10, finds a study by the American Gut Project. A wide variety of produce and legumes tamps down inflammation by feeding and increasing the “good” bacteria that maintain the health of our gut lining.

### Take omega-3 and vitamin D daily

Omega-3s enhance mood and cognitive ability and seem to lessen inflammation in the brain. And new studies show that vitamin D can reduce the inflammatory response to bacteria seeping out of a leaky gut. If you’re not already consuming fish regularly, aim for three grams of omega-3 and 2,000 IU of vitamin D daily.

### Make it spicy

Spices offer huge anti-inflammatory benefits, especially turmeric, which is in a class by itself for its inflammation-fighting polyphenolic compounds. Try adding it to stews, sauces, and smoothies and sprinkling it on oatmeal.

### Go Mediterranean

Data is irrefutable that the Mediterranean diet is the best overall to decrease inflammation, due particularly to its focus on polyphenol-rich extra-virgin olive oil. But not all EVOOs are created equal, cautions Boulder functional-medicine physician Robert Rountree. “If you don’t get a pungent, slightly bitter taste, the health-conferring compounds have been processed out of it.”

### Skip the ibuprofen

It may sound crazy, but anti-inflammatories can cause inflammation because they eat away at the lining of the stomach and colon.

The result: “We see some 100,000 hospitalizations and 16,500 deaths a year in this country from NSAID-induced gastrointestinal bleeds,” says Dr. Kerry Kuehl, director of the Human Performance Laboratory at Oregon Health and Science University. Sore muscles? Drink tart cherry juice. The polyphenolic-loaded natural elixir tests as well as ibuprofen for reducing pain, and it’s side-effect-free.

### Spend 20 extra seconds on your teeth

You could do everything else right, but if you don’t floss, you’re still subject to chronic inflammation. The mouth, just like the gut, serves as a portal for bad bacteria to enter the bloodstream and trigger an immune-system response. When food-borne bacteria lodge in the gums, you can develop gum inflammation, which leads to gum disease and is linked to Alzheimer’s and heart disease.



those in a control group. The study authors suspect this could be one reason why half of clinically depressed people don’t respond to antidepressants — those pills don’t tackle inflammation levels. The evidence is solid enough that Big Pharma is now investing millions to develop a new generation of drugs that will. Why does brain inflammation spike in the first place? Experts like Tillisch suspect that the reason may tie right back to a leaky gut. The nervous system’s connection

between the brain and the gut is one of the strongest in the body; if inflammation goes up in the gut, it could rise in the brain.

While the biochemistry of chronic inflammation is complex, protecting yourself from it is simple. Check the warning signs at left to assess your risk, then follow the rules above to control your immune system. Sticking to the plan won’t be hard. These are the kinds of choices that upgrade every aspect of your life — along with the health of your insides. ■



RADICAL FITNESS  
LAIRD HAMILTON

# Ace an Obstacle Race

Exactly how to train to run faster and push harder on any course.



**THIS YEAR** millions of people will compete in an obstacle race like Tough Mudder, Warrior Dash, Spartan — or Force of Nature, the 10-mile, 20-obstacle race that I helped design and that launches this month. These events are a great way to jump-start your fitness, because training for one gives your workouts focus and purpose. But to do well, you'll need to do more than simply increase your hours at the gym. Obstacle courses test your body in new and unpredictable ways; so should your training plan. Use my four routine essentials and the monthlong program below.

## 1. Do Fast and Slow Cardio

Every obstacle race has a fair amount of mileage, and you'll need to boost your engine for intense sprints, along with longer stretches of running. To become more efficient moving at an all-out effort, try fast-paced body-weight circuits a couple of times a week. (Jumping

jacks, mountain climbers, squats, lunges, and push-ups are a great combo; perform each for a minute, with no breaks between moves.) And log at least one long, slow run a week to build endurance for covering multiple miles.

## 2. Focus on Your Back

Scaling walls, climbing ropes, and military-style crawling through mud demand strong pulling muscles — traps, lats, and the rhomboids in your midback. The best way to strengthen all three groups is with old-school pull-ups and upright rows.

## 3. Add Thrusters

This multifunctional exercise is one of the best ways to strengthen your shoulders, core, and legs. Choose any kind of weight (barbell, dumbbells, kettlebell), and hold the load

close to your chest, elbows down. Squat low, so your hips dip below knee level, and keep your chest up and back flat. Squeeze your glutes as you stand, and press the weight overhead, locking elbows. Do three sets of 12 reps each time you strength train.

## 4. Practice Heart-Rate Control

It's easy to go anaerobic in an obstacle race; you push your heart rate so high that you can't catch your breath, and you're forced to slow down or stop. To avoid hitting this point, use steady breathing to train your heart rate to fall faster and stay lower. After an intense cardio bout (like your body-weight circuit), take a big inhale, pushing your belly out, then exhale, pulling your gut in. Repeat for a full minute. Do this often enough in training and you'll naturally breathe this way on race day. ■



### WHAT TO DO

## YOUR 4-WEEK TRAINING PLAN

Gradually upping intensity, volume, and distance — then taking a week to recover — will get you race-ready.

### WEEK ONE

#### Monday/Wednesday

Do 1 minute each of jumping jacks, mountain climbers, squats, lunges, and push-ups. Rest 1 minute. Repeat twice.

#### Tuesday/Thursday

Strength train. Include 2 sets of 10 pull-ups and rows one day, 3 sets of 10 thrusters the other.

**Saturday** Jog 75% of racecourse mileage.

### WEEK TWO

#### Monday/Wednesday

Do the body-weight circuit from Week One; move faster and cut rests to 30 seconds between rounds.

#### Tuesday/Thursday

Strength train. Include 3 sets of 12 pull-ups and rows one day, 4 sets of 12 thrusters the other.

**Saturday** Jog 85% of racecourse mileage.

### WEEK THREE

#### Monday/Wednesday

Do the body-weight circuit from Week Two, but add a round — 4 total — keeping rests at 30 seconds.

#### Tuesday/Thursday

Strength train. Include 4 sets of 15 pull-ups and rows one day, 5 sets of 15 thrusters the other.

**Saturday** Jog 95% of racecourse mileage.

### WEEK FOUR

#### Monday/Wednesday

This is your taper week to recover. Do the Week One body-weight circuit (3 rounds with 1-minute rests between rounds).

#### Tuesday/Thursday

Strength train. Include 2 sets of 10 pull-ups and rows one day, 3 sets of 10 thrusters the other.

**Saturday** Jog 75% of racecourse mileage.



PROMOTION

**MEN'S JOURNAL**  
PRESENTS

# THE 2015 ADVENTURE RACE CALENDAR

[MENSJOURNAL.COM/ADVENTURE-RACES](http://MENSJOURNAL.COM/ADVENTURE-RACES)

MUDDERS & OBSTACLE RACES | TRAIL RACES | ULTRAMARATHONS | MOUNTAIN BIKING  
CYCLOCROSS | STAND-UP PADDLEBOARD | SURFING | SKIING | SNOWBOARDING  
WHITewater KAYAK & CANOEING | OPEN WATER SWIMMING | RAGNARS & RELAYS

EVENT INFORMATION, REVIEWS,  
EXPERT ADVICE AND REGISTRATION

GAURAVMAN SHERCHAN - YAK ATTACK





# Ask Dr. Bob

Our in-house doc answers your questions about health, fitness, and living adventurously.



## A NATURAL CURE

**Every spring, my asthma gets worse. What can I do?**

Get some sunshine. A recent study from Tel Aviv University of more than 20,000 asthmatics found that those with a vitamin D deficiency were 25 percent more likely to have flare-ups. Asthma causes inflammation in, and a narrowing of, the airways; vitamin D may counter these ill effects by bolstering the immune system and reducing inflammation. Natural light is the best way for your body to synthesize the vitamin, and you should aim for 15 minutes of rays — or about half the time it takes for your skin to turn pink — two or three times a week (you can find out exactly how much sunshine you need for your skin type and location with the app Dminder). And if you can't get outside, take a vitamin D supplement of at least 2,000 IU daily.

## TECH MYTH

**I keep seeing reports about "text neck." Can using my phone too much really wreck my spine?**

No. This idea, based on research using computer models (not actual humans), is that lowering your head to text, email, or scroll puts the equivalent of up to 60 pounds of pressure on the neck, potentially damaging the spine. The reality? Your neck is designed to flex forward and backward, and to extend. With no weight on your head,

the load on your spine when craning your neck is completely manageable. Compare it to reading a book; humans have used that posture for centuries without problems. But that doesn't mean you have carte blanche to text away. Being constantly hunched over your phone will create body tension and stress, as well as poor posture. Plus, you miss a lot. I had to chase down a thief in New York City after he snatched my cell phone from my hand while I was staring at it! My new policy: Text only when you need to, not just because you can.

## INJURY MUST-DO

**I recently broke my arm skiing. Is there anything I can do to stay in decent shape while I recover?**

First, keep exercising your good arm. Doing shoulder presses and raises, triceps extensions, and biceps curls with your noninjured arm will actually prevent your bad arm from getting weaker. That's thanks to a process called the contralateral strength training effect — when one side gets stronger, it helps the other side retain strength, too. (A recent study found this can actually help you *gain* 8 percent of strength in your injured limb.) Another research-backed tip: Visualize, step-by-step, executing those presses, raises, extensions, and curls with your injured arm. The process of thinking it through activates the neurons in your brain that connect to the muscles in your

injured limb. Studies have shown that keeping those connections firing will help ensure the muscles in your injured limb stay stronger and healthier.

## DIET SMARTS

**I'm watching my sugar intake, but the dried fruit I eat has loads of sugar. Should I skip it?**

Just like whole fruit, dried fruit is rich in healthy antioxidants, but watch your intake. Fruit is naturally sweet, and the dried version can be six times as sugar-dense. For example, a fresh apricot is 9 percent sugar; one dried apricot is 53 percent sugar. And while you're unlikely to eat more than one apricot, it's easy to pop five or six dried ones. The only time I'll indulge in more than a handful of dried fruit is during intense endurance exercise, like my annual Nordic ski marathon, when my body needs quick, simple sugars to refuel. ■



**THE DOC IS ONLINE** Email your questions for Dr. Bob Arnot to [dr.bob@mensjournal.com](mailto:dr.bob@mensjournal.com).

## SECOND OPINION

### DO I REALLY NEED KNEE SURGERY?

#### The Problem

New York City musician Alex Levy had been running regularly for 20 years when he began experiencing persistent pain in his right knee. He tried strengthening exercises with a trainer, then chiropractic work with an osteopath. Neither offered relief. Finally he

got an MRI. His medial meniscus, the cartilage that absorbs shock in the knee, was partially torn. His doctor said surgery was his only option.

#### Second Opinion

A friend urged Levy to see a physical therapist and movement specialist, someone who focuses on the body's biomechanics and corrective exercises. Levy landed in the office of Chris Delehanty, owner of PhysioFitness in New York. Delehanty ran Levy through a series of squat, lunge, and stability tests to pinpoint imbalances that could be contributing to the problem. Then he got

Levy on the massage table, to stretch and knead his leg muscles to detect any spots that could be causing, or compounding, the knee pain. He noticed that a tough knot of tissue in Levy's inner right thigh was putting pressure on a nerve connecting to the knee. When Delehanty applied pressure to release the inner thigh, Levy felt a tingling sensation travel down to exactly where he was feeling pain, and that pain immediately released. Delehanty gave Levy a handful of exercises to prevent his thigh muscles from bunching up and to strengthen his knee — essential for protecting the

torn meniscus while it healed on its own. He told Levy that small tears are common, and not to worry; the meniscus was just masking the real issue.

#### The Bottom Line

Not all knee problems are so easy to correct, Delehanty says, and sometimes surgery is unavoidable. But before knee, shoulder, hip, or any joint-related surgery, consider a consultation with a movement specialist. Levy certainly has no regrets. "I'm 98 percent pain-free and back to running five days a week," he says. "I feel like I dodged a bullet."





A man with short brown hair is sitting on a metal bench in front of a large window. He is wearing a grey zip-up hoodie over a white t-shirt, red and grey athletic shorts, and grey Skechers Sport sneakers with black laces. He has large white headphones on his head and is holding a smartphone in his hands. The window behind him shows a view of a city and some greenery. The text "COMFORT INCLUDED" is visible in the upper right, and the Skechers Sport logo is in the bottom right.

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**SKECHERS**  
**SPORT**  
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# Health News

The month's most important research discoveries, updates, and advice.

## The Risks of an Aspirin a Day

 Millions of Americans pop a daily aspirin to help prevent strokes and heart attacks. But new research shows that for anyone who isn't at high cardiovascular risk, the painkiller offers little if any benefit, and taking it regularly can lead to brain and gastrointestinal bleeding. "Aspirin is not a benign drug," says lead study author Dr. Salim Virani, who analyzed the medical records of nearly 70,000 patients who reported that they took preventative aspirin. "The risks can be life threatening, and that far outweighs any potential benefit in terms of prevention." The safer and more effective move, he says, is to toss the pills and focus on lifestyle modifications. Previous research shows that eating a diet full of produce, nuts, fish, dairy, and whole grains, along with drinking less, exercising more, keeping your weight in check, and not smoking, can slash your risk of heart attack by more than 80 percent.

### More Reason to Question Herbal Supplements


 GNC, Walgreens, Walmart, and Target recently came under fire from New York State's attorney general for selling sham herbal supplements. Using a method called DNA barcoding, a team of researchers tested six supplements sold at these national chains, including ginseng, ginkgo biloba, echinacea, and Saint-John's-wort. The researchers concluded that 79 percent of the items tested contained none of the botanicals listed on their labels, and 35 percent contained fillers such as rice, wheat, and even houseplants. While many doubt the accuracy of DNA barcoding, experts agree that anyone taking supplements should seek out brands that allow outside testers to scrutinize the quality of their ingredients. While such products — from brands like MegaFood, New Chapter, Traditional Medicinals, and Garden of Life — cost more, you'll at least be more certain that you're getting what you pay for.



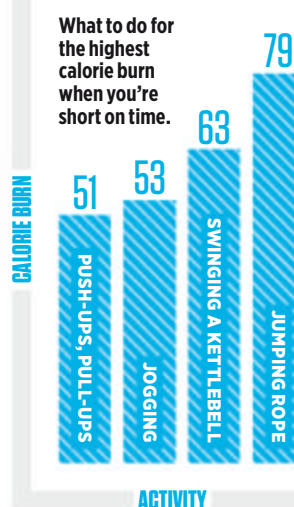
## Being Unfit Is Worse Than Being Fat

Lack of physical activity causes twice as many early deaths as obesity, researchers at the University of Cambridge found. They compared the body-mass indexes, waist circumferences, and physical activity levels of more than 330,000 people over 12 years. "Physical activity has positive effects on blood pressure, glucose metabolism, and insulin sensitivity, regardless of being overweight," says study author Ulf Ekelund. "Exercise, and the more the better, is one of the best medical treatments you can get."

### Compression Wear Won't Give You an Edge

 Compression items supposedly hold muscles in place and improve blood flow to boost athletic performance. According to a new study, none of that actually happens. Researchers outfitted elite runners with calf sleeves, then measured oxygen uptake, stride length and frequency, and body positioning. The result? There was no difference between the compression and no-compression runs. The study authors add that there is one time when compression wear does seem to work: for recovery. Save your calf and arm sleeves for postworkout.

### The Best 5-Minute Workout





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**PERFORMANCE**  
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**YOU CAN'T BEAT MEB.  
BUT YOU CAN JOIN HIM.**



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4

**MEB**  
AMERICA'S TOP MARATHONER



Don't plan on beating Meb to the finish line. Follow his lead instead. Meb wears Skechers GOrun 4 to run more efficiently and you can too. Designed with a virtually seam-free upper and our Mid-Foot Strike Technology, these shoes will help you get your miles in.

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2015

# THE 50 BEST PLACES TO LIVE NOW

Start a business, surf on your lunch break, buy your dream home — our guide to the cities and towns where life is good.







# VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

**A SOCIAL BEACH  
TOWN WITHOUT THE  
BILLIONAIRES.**

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA** used to be full of laid-back, middle-class beach towns. One by one they have disappeared — the locals pushed inland, their modest neighborhoods razed to make room for trophy homes and luxury condos. And then there's Ventura. This sleepy city of 106,000, located midway between Malibu and Santa Barbara, remains refreshingly unpolished, "like a 1961 Ford pickup that's been well kept," says C.J. Paone, a 44-year-old architect who's lived here for 11 years.

The city's blue-collar roots are evident in the fleets of commercial fishing boats in the harbor. Main Street has more thrift stores than chain stores. Cross Highway 101 and head toward the Santa Ynez Mountains and you'll spot — or at least hear the roar of — vintage hot rods. Ventura County was a drag-racing hot spot in the 1950s and

remains full of gearheads and high-end custom shops.

Patagonia, with a workforce of 550, is one of Ventura's largest employers. A start-up incubator funded by the city is hatching new businesses, particularly in health care and technology, such as the Trade Desk, a five-year-old firm that provides services to digital advertisers. "My board has asked me multiple times to move to New York," says Jeff Green, the company's co-founder. "But we've made the choice to be in Ventura; it's one of the best-kept secrets in California."

Underappreciated, of course, also means undervalued. In Midtown, a neighborhood of modest single-story bungalows, a three-bedroom, turn-of-the-century Craftsman can be found for around \$600,000. And good public schools mean you don't have to send your kids to a private-school money pit.

That was a big part of the draw for Phil Graves, who recently moved here from Berkeley to run an investment fund at Patagonia. "Ventura is a better fit for us," he says. "The weather is 65 to 75 degrees all year, so we're at the beach with the kids on weekends. And at least a couple of days a week, some buddies from Patagonia and I might go on a bike ride to Ojai and back during lunch, about 20 miles. They've got showers here on Patagonia's campus. Or if you're pressed for time and you run to your meeting sweaty and stinky, nobody cares. It's very, very chill here."

—JEFF TYLER

	106,300		\$66,600
	\$389,400		272
	49% HIGHER		22 MIN.

An afternoon jog in Ventura's Grant Park

## KEY



POPULATION



MEDIAN HOME PRICE



COST OF LIVING  
(RELATIVE TO U.S.  
MEDIAN)



MEDIAN INCOME



DAYS OF SUNSHINE



AVERAGE COMMUTE

DATA: SPERLING'S BEST PLACES





# NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

THE COUNTRY MUSIC  
CAPITAL SINGS  
A NEW SONG.

**ONE OF THE MANY JOYS** of living in Nashville is the way music suffuses life on an almost atomic level. On any given night, someone might lean into your ear, point to the guy on the pedal steel guitar, and rattle off a list of classic recordings he played on or tell you he wrote

a song you know by heart. Talk to a computer programmer here and there's a good chance he'll compare coding to songwriting.

But Music City is changing, and fast. It was the second-fastest-growing U.S. city in 2013 and boasts the strongest employment growth of any large metropolis since the Great Recession. You can see it in the condo towers, office buildings, and new hotels that now cast a shadow over the city. (Some old-timers refer to their town as "Little Dubai.") And you can taste it in one of the most buzzed-about restaurant scenes anywhere, in which a classic meat-and-three like Swett's thrives alongside the post-modern cuisine at the Catbird Seat. Musicians still flock here, and it's the headquarters of Jack

White's mini-empire. But a new wave of artists, designers, filmmakers, and entrepreneurs is putting down roots, as well.

Drew Bryant is a case in point. Last year he left Chicago, and a well-paying gig as a personal chef, to open his first restaurant, the French-inspired Porter House Bistro in East Nashville, where rent is half of what it would have been in the Windy City. In Chicago, Bryant and his wife shared a cramped 700-square-foot apartment. Now, for the same price, they have a house three times that size, with a yard, and trees. Even with the drama of running a restaurant, life in Nashville "is a lot less stressful," he says.

Homes like Bryant's in his leafy north side neighborhood

(literally: The neighborhood is home to more than 100 tree species) fetch about \$400,000. That same \$400,000 could get you a bit more yard and more likely a Craftsman in the East Nashville neighborhood near his restaurant. A glut of new construction can barely keep up with demand, though, and the area's early-20th-century Victorians don't come on the market often.

The industries that have drawn people here for decades — music, health care, education — have been joined by a steadily growing tech sector, which recently got a boost when Nashville was named one of four metro areas to get the ultra-high-speed internet service Google Fiber. That announcement was made at the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, which is housed inside a repurposed trolley barn, not far from the Ryman Lofts, the two-year-old housing development built especially for artists and musicians. Along the same stretch, the long-beloved dive the Hermitage Cafe thrives near the boutique coffeehouse Crema — the old Nashville co-existing with the new.



The Pharmacy  
Burger Parlor.  
Right: Shoemaker  
Phillip Nappi,  
one of Nashville's  
many craftspeople.



## THE CITIES OF THE FUTURE

Climate change and population growth are forcing America's cities to get creative. Here are five places that are addressing those future problems now. (They also happen to be very nice places to live.)

### → Chicago

Some forecasters predict that the Windy City could become hotter than Baton Rouge, Louisiana. To preserve its status as one of America's great cities, Chicago is planting gardens on building rooftops to deflect the sun's heat, replacing impenetrable concrete with permeable pavers, and even trading out cold-weather trees like white oaks for hot-weather cousins like swamp oaks and sweet gums.

### → Sacramento, California

California's capital, just west of the Sierra Nevada, is on a mission to have the greenest streets in America. Some 1,700 miles of bike lanes bask in the shade of 7 million trees — a canopy that covers a quarter of the city. Curbside trash is carted away by trucks that are powered by liquefied natural gas. Even the street sweepers are fueled by restaurant waste.

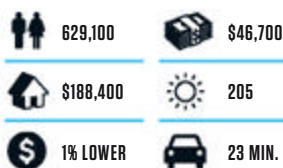


MARK  
MONTGOMERY

47, investor and  
entrepreneur

"A few years ago, I had to decide whether to move to Silicon Valley or stay here. I stayed. People underestimate Nashville, which puts you in a really interesting position. You meet people who three years ago never would have dreamed of living here — these outstanding coders, designers, entrepreneurs — but it still has a small-town feeling. You never know who you're going to run into. The other day, I saw Robert Plant pumping gas."

"The city feels more dynamic and diverse than it's felt in years," says Kate O'Neill, who moved to Nashville a dozen years ago to become a songwriter. But her tech chops were in higher demand, and she's now CEO of KO Insights, a marketing-strategy firm. O'Neill and her team have worked with clients such as Amazon, Nike, and the Grand Ole Opry — a trajectory that proves as good a metaphor as any for the city she calls home. —STEVE HARUCH



#### → Boulder, Colorado

As more people move here to bike, hike, get rich, and otherwise live the good life, Boulder is busy building its own green-power company. When it opens, half of the city's energy will come from renewable sources, and residents will contribute their own solar-generated power to the grid. The city's ultimate goal is even more audacious: to get out of fossil fuels completely.

#### → Eugene, Oregon

A crunchy and decidedly left-leaning college town on the western edge of the Cascades, Eugene, population 160,000, has a mass-transportation system that's a model for cities far larger. Hybrid electric buses run along dedicated lanes throughout the city, transporting riders along two lines from downtown Eugene to the University of Oregon to downtown Springfield, about four miles away.

#### → Dallas

Dallas evokes big oil, crowded superhighways, suburban sprawl. And the city is working hard to change that perception. Some 40 percent of its electricity is now generated by wind. In 2012, the city opened Klyde Warren Park over a massive freeway downtown. In 2015, a new streetcar system will ferry passengers around town. Next year: a \$65 million renovation of the downtown farmers market.



# Portland, Maine

Not so preppy anymore.



Portland's  
East End,  
overlooking  
Casco Bay

**WANDERING AROUND** Maine's biggest city, it's hard not to wonder where all the boat-shoed Republicans have gone. The vibe in Portland these days melds Mainers' natural druthers for all things woody and homespun with a bohemian, creative-class streak that's more commonly associated with that other Portland.

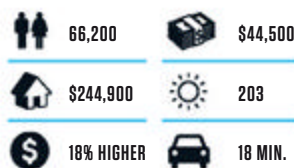
Both the rocky coast and the New England high country sit on the city's doorstep. On weekdays during the warmer months, nine-to-fivers will often put in for an evening paddle on Casco Bay or crowd the waterfront decks at Boone's Fish House & Oyster Room. Just north of city limits, the suburb of Falmouth offers a 45-mile network of forested, mostly singletrack trails protected by a local land trust. "You can stay pretty close to town but still be out in the woods, and ride for hours," says Matt Robbins, an ad agency production manager. And the surfing (that's right, surfing) is even closer. "I can drive to Higgins Beach in 10 minutes, surf over lunch when nobody's there, and be back at work within an hour," says Eli Cayer.

Cayer, 41, is the founder of Urban Farm Fermentory,

a purveyor of hard ciders and kombuchas housed in an old warehouse in the rebounding, postindustrial East Bayside neighborhood (it's nicknamed Yeast Bayside for all the microbreweries located there). Yet even as it trends artisanal, Portland's waterfront has retained its working-class vibe (and slightly fishy smell), with plenty of lobstermen and seafood processors. Home prices have stayed steady, too. For \$230,000 you can get a single-bedroom condo in the East End, within walking distance of the Old Port nightlife as well as the trails and beaches of the Eastern Promenade. Across the Fore River in South Portland, the same sum will get you a yard and a three-bedroom bungalow.

Winters in Maine are no joke, with nor'easters dropping heavy snow well into April. But nearby are a half dozen ski resorts, as well as a host of innovative yet unpretentious farm-to-table restaurants. In the new Portland, that's one way residents stay cozy and satiated through the freeze.

—BRIAN KEVIN







# SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

**LIVING IN AMERICA'S BOOMTOWN — FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE.**

**ONCE UPON A TIME**, if you were young and seeking power and fame, you headed to New York or Los Angeles. Today the ambitious flock to San Francisco. The result: Rents are skyrocketing, luxury condos pop up while cherished lesbian bars close down, protestors hurl themselves before Google buses,

and legions of would-be moguls search for new stuff to disrupt.

Do you really want to live here? Yes, you do.

The future is being made in San Francisco, and people know it. "Everyone you meet is working on something they believe has the potential to make an impact," says David Hegarty, who moved here from Seattle five years ago, and after three failed start-ups, finally struck a nerve with Fixed, an iPhone app that helps users deal with parking tickets. Hundreds of start-ups like that are now based in the city's South of Market district,

amid omakase sushi joints and raw-food bistros.

On the other hand, the median home price here is nearly \$1 million. In Hegarty's Noe Valley neighborhood, a two-bedroom apartment rents for \$5,000.

Who can afford to live like that? Most longtime residents will tell you: "Douchey guys driving Teslas." Wen Shen, a surgeon here for 20 years, often gripes about the way his city is changing. Yet, when offered the chance to relocate not long ago, he decided to stay put. Why? Well, there was that "mind-blowing" dinner at Kin Khao, a Thai place near Union Square. And then there's this: Amid so much change, it still is San Francisco. "When I'm driving home, I go up the back side of Twin Peaks," Shen says. "When I crest over the top of the hill, I look straight out at the Marin Headlands and see the opening of the bay. The little hit of beauty, it's one of the best moments of my day."

—ANDREW LEONARD

	807,800		\$73,800
	\$875,100		259
	143% HIGHER		30 MIN.



## If You Can't Afford San Francisco, There's Always...

### OAKLAND

In North Oakland's trendy Temescal corridor, a two-bedroom house can cost \$800,000. Compared with San Francisco, that's a bargain. Other neighborhoods, such as Lake Merritt, are more affordable. But Oakland offers more than (relatively) sane real estate. The weather is great (no freezing, foggy summer days here); the population is incredibly diverse; and a burgeoning restaurant scene rivals the one across the bay.

### SEBASTOPOL

The Bay Area's laid-back ethos endures in this town of 7,600. Set against the Sonoma County foothills and filled with yoga studios, wineries, and microbreweries, Sebastopol has a cost of living about half that of San Francisco, yet the quality of life is distinctly gourmet. And because it's home to businesses like *Make* magazine and computer-book publisher O'Reilly Media, you don't have to abandon the tech world to live here.



## NEED WORK? MOVE HERE

Five great cities where jobs are plentiful.

### DENVER

Energy companies are turbocharging the Mile High economy — both the fossil-fuel and clean-tech sectors surged about 6 percent here last year. Resorts in the Rockies also are roaring. "We're hiring ferociously," says Cody Goodmen, a recruiter for Vail.

### SEATTLE

Move over, Microsoft and Amazon. Many of California's key tech players — including Google and Facebook — are expanding aggressively into the Emerald City. So is Elon Musk's SpaceX, which plans to hire 1,000 people.

### HOUSTON

Never mind the current energy bust; Houston is expected to create 63,000 jobs this year in fields like construction, health care, and financial services. And new chemical refineries spell opportunities for engineers, geologists, and other scientific types.

### NAPLES, FLA.

Remember all those unsold homes built on spec? Sold. People are moving back to southwestern Florida, and developers are scrambling to keep up. And the city's white-sand beaches and access to the Everglades keep attracting the tourists.

### SALT LAKE CITY

Goldman Sachs has its second-largest U.S. office here, beneath the snow-capped Wasatch Mountains, and plenty of other financial firms are following suit. That, plus growth in technology, has driven unemployment to a low 3.2 percent.





Portland's riverfront: flood-free now and for decades to come

# Where to Escape Climate Change

As sea levels rise, water runs out, and killer storms increase, where will you want to live 25 years from now? Here are seven cities that may get better due to global warming.

## **Anchorage, Alaska: Colorado Dreaming**

As temperatures rise, snow at ski resorts in Colorado and Utah could decline in depth by at least 25 percent and may even vanish. Alaska is warming, too, by as much as 13 degrees by 2100. But skiers around Anchorage will still be able to find steep, deep runs, thanks to colder average temperatures and a unique microclimate. Case in point: Alyeska Resort. Its base is just 420 feet above sea level, but when moist air from the Gulf of Alaska hits the Chugach Mountains, an average 650 inches of snow a year falls on Alyeska's 4,000-foot summit.

## **Oahu: Last Island Standing**

As sea levels rise, all the world's islands are slowly disappearing. But the Hawaiian Islands, situated in a zone of the Central Pacific where big tropical storms are rare, should remain relatively safe. Place your bets on Oahu, where Mauna Kea — the tallest mountain in the Pacific — offers plenty of high ground in the event of coastal flooding. And according to

University of Hawaii geologists, Oahu's famed beaches are eroding at a slower rate than those elsewhere on the islands.

## **Buffalo, New York: May All Your Winters Be White**

If you want your grandkids to build snowmen and skate on a real pond, follow the lake effect to Buffalo. Climatologists differ on whether climate change will worsen or mellow the monster storms that Buffalo is famous for, but they are pretty certain the snow will keep coming. "Lake-effect snow is different because it relies on evaporation from the Great Lakes," says Ben Zaitchik, a professor of climate science at Johns Hopkins University. "That lake-effect enhancement might offset other warming effects." Snow isn't the only attraction: The city is bike-friendly and ethnically diverse, with beautiful (and affordable) old houses and real neighborhoods.

## **Traverse City, Michigan: The New Napa**

Parts of California are already getting too hot to cultivate premium grapes, so we'll see

growing regions pushed north. Michigan's scenic Upper Peninsula — conveniently located on the 45th parallel, the same latitude as France's Bordeaux region — could benefit from an increasing ability to grow warmer-weather varieties like chardonnay and pinot noir. The state is currently home to about 100 wineries, up from 32 in 2002, and Traverse City, with a historic downtown, is the heart of the wine-growing action.

## **Boston: An East Coast Ark**

Powerful hurricanes and rising sea levels are expected to cause

epic flooding up and down the East Coast. Boston, however, looks like a relatively safe harbor. It was recently named the most resilient city on the Eastern Seaboard, based on climate threats, environmental degradation, energy resources, infrastructure, and community cohesion. And if all the brains at the city's noted institutions of higher learning can't figure out a solution to the rising seas, then no one can.

## **Portland, Oregon: Utopia?**

Drought and wildfires may consume California, but due to an abundant, natural supply of freshwater and cool coastal breezes, you will be able to enjoy lattes, microbrews, and farm-fresh food here well into the century. What's more, Portland takes climate change seriously, evident in a smart public transportation system, efficient buildings, and green affordable housing.

## **Huntington Beach, California: Surf City Survivor**

Southern California's beaches are nowhere near as vulnerable as those on the East Coast, but all of them are expected to steadily lose sand. The beaches in and around Orange County's Huntington Beach, a laid-back but upscale city of 190,000, are expected to last the longest — holding on to about 200 yards of precious sand into the 22nd century. In fact, Huntington and nearby Seal Beach could pick up more than a million cubic meters of sand swept away from other beaches, according to the California Department of Energy.

—ADAM BLUESTEIN



Huntington Beach, SoCal's last great stretch of sand





# NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

**A PARTY TOWN GROWS UP, VOODOO INTACT.**

**NEW ORLEANS CANNOT BE** understood without grasping its relationship to alcohol — but that’s probably the most misunderstood thing about the place. While the city may always be best known for a few drunken, bead-grabbing blocks of Bourbon Street, no one moves to New Orleans for Bourbon Street. Post-Katrina, the city has evolved into something more than a party town: It’s become a magnet for young entrepreneurs and a haven for those fleeing pricey, work-obsessed towns with none of NOLA’s inimitable flavor.

Although you don’t have to be sauced to embrace life here, the city still embodies the best qualities of drunkenness: total abandon, a resistance to sound judgment, a casual warmth. Spend just a few weeks in town and you’ll find yourself part of a community; an afternoon yoga class leads to a backyard crawfish boil, where you meet the crew you end up marching with in a second-line parade the following day. (New Orleans celebrates just about everything — from local pro-



Cocktail hour at Cure, in Uptown. Below: an impromptu jam session

duce and po’boys to funerals — with brassy, ragtag parades.) “We’ve got all the dynamism of a big city but on a human scale,” says Pableaux Johnson, a photographer, writer, and 15-year resident, whose Monday-night red-beans-and-rice dinners pull together a wide cross section of the city — actors, chefs, artists, activists, musicians, you name it. “People forget how small we are because we cast such a big shadow,” Johnson says. The population stands at just over 340,000.

The latest wave of newcomers includes postgrads starting food-truck empires, filmmakers taking advantage of Louisiana’s generous tax credits, and self-employed 30-somethings lured by housing stock that is

both majestic (wrought iron balconies, tropical gardens) and affordable (a 150-year-old Creole cottage can be had for about \$350,000). As always, New Orleans has the nation’s highest density of dive bars. But now there’s a gallery scene along St. Claude Avenue, a slew of inventive pop-up restaurants, an organic food co-op, and even a burgeoning tech community fueled by Launch Pad, a well-regarded start-up incubator.

The Big Easy is not so easy in a number of ways — the crime rate remains high enough that no one walks alone at night, the public school system is a shambles, and steady jobs can be hard to find — but it’s still a place of rare charm and opportunity. “The things that once

made places like Austin and San Francisco such bohemian draws are possible here,” says Laura Stein, who moved from Brooklyn four years ago and now runs Dancing Grounds, a dance studio (which doubles as a community outreach center) in the resurgent Bywater neighborhood. “To do what I’ve done here in New York, I’d have to be a trust fund millionaire.”

—DAVID AMSDEN

	341,400		\$36,700
	\$170,000		216
	1% LOWER		23 MIN.

**AARON CLARK-RIZZO**

30, attorney

“Living in New Orleans is a leap of faith that defies all logic. You walk out your front door on a balmy Friday afternoon and encounter a marching band practicing for a Mardi Gras parade. Suddenly you’re at a shrimp boil in a backyard with a swimming pool where the host is a friend of a friend, but no one questions why you’re there. This city just sucks you in.”







## SURF'S UP

Four Under-the-Radar Beach Towns

### FOLLY BEACH, S.C.

Just 12 miles from the nightlife and history of downtown Charleston, Folly Beach has everything you want in a beach town: broad open beaches, a strip of funky bars and oyster shacks — and quiet neighborhoods where \$200,000 buys you a place steps from the sand.

### ASTORIA, ORE.

Perched on the bluffs where the Columbia River meets the Pacific, this former logging boomtown now attracts entrepreneurs and families priced out of nearby Portland and Seattle. Kayakers and paddlers can play Lewis and Clark along the riverbanks, while nearby Fort Stevens State Park offers miles of deserted and windswept beaches.

### NARRAGANSETT, R.I.

Just across the bay from Newport and 30 miles south of Providence, this town of 15,000 has all the lobster boats, lighthouses, and wide sandy beaches you expect of a New England seaside village. Top-notch public schools make it popular with families.

### KILL DEVIL HILLS, N.C.

If you want to be a surf bum, East Coast-style, you can't do better than this town of 6,800 on North Carolina's outer banks, which boasts the crunchiest and most consistent waves on the Atlantic coast. Jobs center on tourism and fishing, but the town is full of folks who freelance or work remotely and want to live someplace mellow — where the next big swell is right around the corner.



# Bend, Oregon

The city's motto says it all: "Your vacation is our life."

**THINK OF OREGON**, and a hazy green vista comes to mind, a valley of evergreens behind a veil of perpetual rain. It's easy to forget that half of the state is desert. It's the other Oregon, and Bend is its bustling metropolis.

A former logging town on the edge of the Cascade Range, where dense pine forest gives way to desert junipers and sagebrush, Bend is sunny and mild all year round. It's connected to millions of acres of wilderness by a network of running, hiking, biking, and ski trails that range from the Deschutes River, through town, up onto Mount Bachelor, and out into the wild, arid plateau of Central Oregon along the Oregon Desert Trail. There's world-class climbing in the canyon at Smith Rock Park, Class V whitewater, and abundant trout, steelhead, and salmon, all close to town.

The thing is, and this is key, the people who live in Bend actually do all these things — getting outside is built into the routine of daily life, along with work, family, and community. "You can do it all here," says pro cyclist Chris Horner, who's lived in Bend since 2000. "I

just hop on my bike and go. You're always close to downtown, but you can get out of town in five minutes."

The job market is limited; tourism, a nearby medical center, and Les Schwab Tires are the major employers. But there's a vibrant entrepreneurial spirit, from outdoor-oriented start-ups like HydroFlask to the micro-artisanal, with athletes, artists, and craftspeople finding ways to get by in paradise. At McKay's, a beloved local restaurant tucked into a 1916-era bungalow, you're as likely to find yourself elbow to elbow with a blacksmith, a surgeon, a musician, an ultramarathoner, or a micro-brewer. "We're really creating a unique culture," says Paul Arney, a refugee from Seattle and founder of Paul Arney's Ale Apothecary, a tiny sour-beer lab half-hidden in pine forest a few minutes outside of town. "Where I'm

from was just work, work, work. In Bend, your job and career are important, but there are all these other things — creativity, family, getting outside — that are equally important."

—JULIA HOLMES

	81,200		\$52,600
	\$275,000		162
	22% HIGHER		15 MIN.



One reason to live in Bend: This is what a lunch break looks like.





Nina's Coffee Cafe, a popular hangout in Cathedral Hill



## SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

**AN OVERLOOKED TWIN GETS A CHANCE TO SHINE.**

**SAINT PAUL HAS** long been overshadowed by its slicker, richer twin. And, frankly, the people who live there wouldn't have it any other way. While Minneapolis has more of the pro sports franchises and corporate HQs, this once-working class city is rapidly consolidating all the cool, and quietly emerging as a laid-back, homespun alternative to Minneapolis — a small town set in the middle of

a bustling metro area of more than 2 million people.

"There's a real sense of community — 50 people will show up at the drop of a hat to discuss a regulation change at a dog park," says Lenny Russo, the James Beard Award-nominated chef of Heartland. "Saint Paul reminds me of Charleston or Savannah in that it's preserved its original housing stock," he says. "There are these wonderful old neighborhoods within walking distance of downtown."

In neighborhoods like Cathedral Hill, a young family can find a four-bedroom Victorian in good condition for about \$450,000 — two-thirds the cost in Minneapolis. In Lowertown,

the once-industrial zone perched on the bank of the Mississippi, old factories and warehouses have been converted into lofts for young creative-class types. The streets are packed with galleries showing local artists, unpretentious bars and restaurants, and a farmers market brimming with Midwestern-made or grown goods that's rated one of the best in the country.

Sure, plenty of people commute to jobs in Minneapolis or the surrounding suburbs, where many of the area's big companies are based. But the commutes are generally easy — and there's no need to leave Saint Paul once the nine-to-five is over. And since it's still Minnesota, escaping to the country is a breeze. "In addition to all the perks of a big city, it's so easy to get out on a bike," says Dan Casebeer, a longtime Saint Pauler who runs Grand Performance bike shop. "After work we bike from downtown, cross the river, and a couple of miles later we're in the middle of this lush, rolling farmland." —GRANT DAVIS

	286,200		\$46,300
	\$156,900		194
	2% HIGHER		22 MIN.

## FIND YOUR DREAM HOME

Whether you pine for a stately Victorian, a trendy downtown loft, a ranch home on a river, or a comfy perch in suburbia, here are five places where the house you've always wanted is within reach.

### → Grand Rapids, Michigan

In the late 19th century, when Grand Rapids was known as "Furniture City," its lumber barons lived in grand homes atop Heritage Hill, with stunning views of the Grand River. Today, one of those Victorians can be yours for about \$400,000. Finding work shouldn't be too much of a problem: Grand Rapids remains a leading center for design, boasting Herman Miller, Steelcase, and other manufacturers.

### → Boise, Idaho

This city of 214,000 may be the holy grail of mountain towns: stunning, affordable, and a big enough place to find work other than bartending or operating a ski lift. In Boise's leafy North End district, three-bedroom Victorians and postwar ranch homes start as low as \$200,000. Skiing at Bogus Basin is just 16 miles away, and the Boise River, which runs right through town, is a paddler's heaven.



## FITNESS MECCAS

When you're *really* serious about training.

### CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

Nestled between two mountains at a dramatic bend in the Tennessee River, Chattanooga has a competition going on most every weekend, including both a full and a half Ironman and the USA Cycling Professional Road and Time Trial National Championships. Come fall, there's the cult classic ChattaJack 31-mile SUP and kayak race through the river gorge, and in winter, an epic 50-mile trail run on Lookout Mountain. There's a hip, revitalized downtown, and because of an influx of companies such as Volkswagen to the area, there are jobs as well. Says Mark McKnight, a Raleigh, North Carolina, transplant: "When you compare the quality of life with the cost of living, it's a no-brainer."

### FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

Best known as the home of the University of Arkansas Razorbacks (*Wooo. Pig. Sooiie!*), this city of about 79,000 increasingly draws a different kind of athlete: mountain bikers. That's due to a new network of nearly 250 miles of trails that connect five nearby towns, and spiral into the spectacular Ozark foothills. Miles of world-class single-track are

FROM LEFT: TERESA BOARDMAN; DAWN KISH/ALAMY



linked to the paved urban trail system, which makes them a cinch to access, even on a commute home from work. “You can go from the trails onto pavement into town and have a local pint at a four-star restaurant — and no one looks at you like you’re a dirty weirdo,” says Phil Penny, president of the Ozark Offroad Cyclists.

#### FLAGSTAFF, ARIZ.

Perched at 7,000 feet in the shadow of the San Francisco Peaks, Flagstaff has long attracted runners to train at altitude on a wide diversity of trails, from desert landscapes to the alpine tundra of Humphrey’s Peak, which tops out at 12,637 feet. Races are abundant, but the true spirit of the town is on display Thursday mornings, when runners of all levels gather outside Biff’s Bagels for the 10-mile run that snakes around town. Says ultrarunner Rob Krar, who came to Flagstaff nine years ago and never left: “There is a true sense of community here that I don’t feel in other hotbeds of running.”

#### CARLSBAD, CALIF.

The weather is perfect, the Pacific Ocean is a lot more fun than a pool, and there are more than 50 miles of trails within city limits. No wonder so many triathletes live in this city of 110,000 about 30 miles north of San Diego. It’s not cheap here — the median home price tops \$699,000 — but the economy is strong, with employers such as the video-game maker Rockstar and Callaway Golf. There’s also been an influx of specialists — physical therapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists, and doctors — who set up shop to treat champion athletes like Steve Scott and Michellie Jones.



# Carbondale, Colorado

Down the hill from Aspen, a Rocky Mountain haven for the nonmogul set.

#### THE ROARING FORK VALLEY is

Colorado’s latest too-good-to-be-true Rocky Mountain oasis, a 50-mile-long sagebrush basin bookended by the glitz of Aspen above and the decidedly blue-collar enclave of Glenwood Springs, on the banks of the Colorado River. In the middle, both geographically and culturally, sits Carbondale. The town’s just-right location has helped it avoid the over-the-top mansions and development fights seen in Aspen, and has kept home prices on a reasonable-enough level to make buying one possible without an IPO on your résumé. Working ranches and farms dot the landscape, blue-ribbon trout streams course through the valley, and dramatic peaks hover above a Main Street with a down-home attitude more common in an Iowa farm town than a Colorado ski destination. “There’s a real sense of community here,” says award-winning brewer Chase Engel, who started Carbondale’s Roaring Fork Beer Company in 2013. “Everyone is from someplace else, so you make friends fast.”

That welcoming spirit derives, in part, from a populace that is almost single-minded when it comes to its downtime passion: outdoor recreation. And Carbondale has it all, including mountain biking on Red Hill, just outside of town, weekday trail runs on the high-country plateau of 12,966-foot Mount Sopris, which dominates the town’s skyline, weekend rafting trips on the Class IV Roaring Fork



Aspen’s slopes are an easy 40 minutes away.

River, and skiing at one of the four mountains that make up Aspen/Snowmass. Lunchtime bike rides on Red Hill are a regular part of the workday, says Ian Anderson, a partner at Backbone Media, a Carbondale-based PR firm. “We still work hard, but no one who’s living here has the goal of climbing a corporate ladder,” he says.

Residents primarily work in Aspen or Glenwood Springs, but there is an increasing number of white-collar outfits like Backbone opening shop directly in town, as have a half-dozen farm-to-table restaurants. Local chef Mark Fischer, the talent

behind Town and Phat Thai in Carbondale, has been in the valley for more than 20 years now, and he’s watched Carbondale come into its own. “A lot of us ended up here because of Aspen, but made a life down valley in Carbondale over the years,” he says. “It’s where people who are going to put down roots end up.”

—GRANT DAVIS

	6,400		\$57,200
	\$348,800		242
	37% HIGHER		27 MIN.

#### → Oklahoma City

It’s hard to believe, but downtown Oklahoma City offers the kind of walkable, vibrant living associated with places many times its size. In the Bricktown neighborhood, new 1,400-square-foot units fetch about \$300,000 — and are steps away from many restaurants, shops, and bars. Nearby is the new heart of the city on the banks of the Oklahoma River, which is often crowded with kayaks and canoes.

#### → Greenville, South Carolina

This once-shuttered textile town near the Blue Ridge Mountains has been on the rise, thanks to employers such as BMW and Michelin. Its bustling Main Street still evokes Mayberry — only with better restaurants and galleries displaying local artists. In the trendy neighborhood around North Main Street, a 1950s-era three-bedroom brick home — with a big, comfy front porch — goes for about \$350,000.

#### → Des Moines

What Midwestern life is supposed to be: plentiful jobs at major insurance and financial firms; a symphony, opera house, theaters, and art galleries; and neighborhoods where a modern four-bedroom can be had for about \$300,000. That includes a swimming pool, deck, and massive backyard — perfect for mingling with presidential wannabes every four years when Iowa’s caucuses roll around.





# The Rust Belt Reborn

Two great American cities left for dead. Two astonishing reinventions.

## PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

**ONCE DESCRIBED AS** “hell with the lid off” because of the clouds of black smoke that hung above it, Pittsburgh now hums along quietly with clean industries like technology, education, and medicine, all under mostly blue skies. It lost a generation of young people to other cities (unemployment hit 18 percent in the 1980s), but the number of 24- to 35-year-olds is now up, due to an affordable and easygoing lifestyle that’s still culturally rich — with world-class museums and restaurants, miles of bike paths, and nature trails that get you out of town and deep into the nearby Appalachian hills.

The city’s hillside neighborhoods offer spectacular views of three great rivers — the Monongahela, the Allegheny, and the Ohio — which meet downtown at the Point, an 18th-century military fort that’s now a 36-acre city park. Housing options include a Victorian mansion in old-money Shadyside for \$475,000 or a row house in artist-gentrified Lawrenceville for \$200,000.

Acres of organic farms and wilderness preserves surround the city, offering local chefs the best seasonal ingredients. Justin Severino left Pittsburgh in the 1990s in search of work, eventually settling in California’s Carmel Valley. But in 2007, missing his family and a hometown vibe, Severino returned and opened Cure in Lawrenceville, where local ingredients inform an always-evolving menu. “It’s so much more gratifying here,” Severino says. “It’s real.”

— JULIA HOLMES

	306,400		\$38,000
	\$76,700		160
	16% LOWER		23 MIN.



A lazy afternoon in Pittsburgh's hip Lawrenceville neighborhood



A summer concert at the Jacobs Pavilion

## CLEVELAND, OHIO

**LEBRON JAMES** isn't the only one who decided to come home. All sorts of Cleveland prodigal sons — entrepreneurs, artists, families — are moving back, lured by the low cost of living and communal vibe, and the chance to build something new. “We’re creating the scene ourselves, rather than jumping into other scenes,” says Jonathon Sawyer, a Cleveland native who left an executive-chef gig in Manhattan in 2007 to return home. He now runs four thriving restaurants, all with a sustainable food ethic, and lives with his family in a sprawling 1900s-era home in the Cleveland Heights neighborhood, where a four-bedroom can be found for around \$150,000. Downtown, meanwhile, has more full-time residents now than ever, along with new luxury condos to house them. And there’s still plenty of space for a new generation of small-scale manufacturers, producing things like bespoke bikes, vinyl records, and artisanal foods.

Many buildings downtown are grand structures built during the city’s industrial heyday. The city’s cultural institutions — like the eminent (and free) Cleveland Museum of Art and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame — have endured, while new ones have popped up, like the Beachland Ballroom, a 1950s Croatian social hall turned music venue. “There’s so much energy,” says Anne Trubek, co-founder of *Belt* magazine, which chronicles life in the new Rust Belt. “If someone’s going to try something, we’re going to rally around them.” —JULIA HOLMES

	398,000		\$26,600
	\$50,300		166
	21% LOWER		24 MIN.

## IF YOU LIVE TO EAT

For some of us, a nice house, a decent job, and the great outdoors are not enough — it’s not the good life without good food. These five towns have the restaurants, chefs, and markets to make any foodie feel right at home.

### → Philadelphia

Two things about Philly: It is affordable, with \$300,000 townhouses and \$1,000-a-month lofts; and it’s crazy for food, both the perfect hoagie and farm-to-table fare. That combination of cheap rents and hungry people makes the city a training ground for culinary young guns, like Rich Landau (Vedge) and Nicholas Elmi (Laurel), who have flocked here to open ambitious restaurants on the cheap.

### → Brooklyn

This borough remains ground zero for all things twee and artisanal, but that’s only a small part of living — and eating — here. With a population of 2.6 million, the borough is huge and amazingly diverse. So as inventive chef-driven bistros proliferate, farther-flung neighborhoods boast outstanding, authentic ethnic cuisine from just about anywhere. (And don’t get us started on the pizza. Or the bagels.)

FROM LEFT: ROB LARSON; JERRY PHENNEY





# Bozeman, Montana

A frontier town's newest gold rush.

**TWENTY YEARS AGO**, Greg Gianforte decided to base his new company in what was then the country's most unlikely destination for a software entrepreneur: Bozeman, Montana. In 2012, Oracle bought that business, RightNow, for \$1.8 billion. Gianforte could have moved anywhere. But he didn't. "I love being able to backpack the Bridger Mountains and then eat downtown at a place like Dave's Sushi," he says. "It just gets in your blood."

The RightNow sale proved to be a watershed moment for this 151-year-old town. Gianforte's employees began hatching start-ups of their own. Out-of-towners took notice and migrated to Bozeman themselves — which helped validate the town's new-found status as a tech center. "It's easy to get people to move here from Silicon Valley," says Joe Wakuski, founder of TEX-base, a Bozeman company that streamlines data management for apparel firms. Wakuski's own life also is a powerful recruiting tool: He lives on a spread 13 miles outside of town along the Gallatin River. "In the summer I bike to work and go fly-fishing and kayaking with my son," he says. "In winter we go skiing —

either at Big Sky or in the back-country a mile from my house."

All mountain towns are picturesque, but few compare to Bozeman: Yellowstone lies 90 minutes south, Big Sky is an hour north, and three blue-ribbon fly-fishing rivers — the Gallatin, the Madison, and the Yellowstone — are a short drive away. "When it's warm, there's daylight from 5:30 in the morning to past 10 at night," says Rob Irizarry, another RightNow alum who stayed put. "You can play in the morning and work late, or work early and play in the afternoon. It's Bozeman's idea of flextime." In fact, says Molly Ambrogi-Yanson, who migrated from Salt Lake City to work at a local ad agency, "some companies even have powder- and fishing-day clauses written into their employment contracts. It's understood that this is why you're here."

Bozeman's housing stock is split in two: You either live inside the "donut" in a \$250,000 starter ranch home; or you live outside of it, spending less but relying on a well and septic system. Whatever your neighborhood or day job, everyone mingles downtown. "The cowboys, the ski bums, the yoga moms — we all go to the same coffee shops and restaurants," says Ambrogi-Yanson. And no matter where you live, says Irizarry, the commute is a breeze: "Rush hour means that instead of taking five minutes to get to work it takes six." —GRANT DAVIS

	37,600		\$44,800
	\$248,000		188
	17% HIGHER		14 MIN.

## → Healdsburg, California

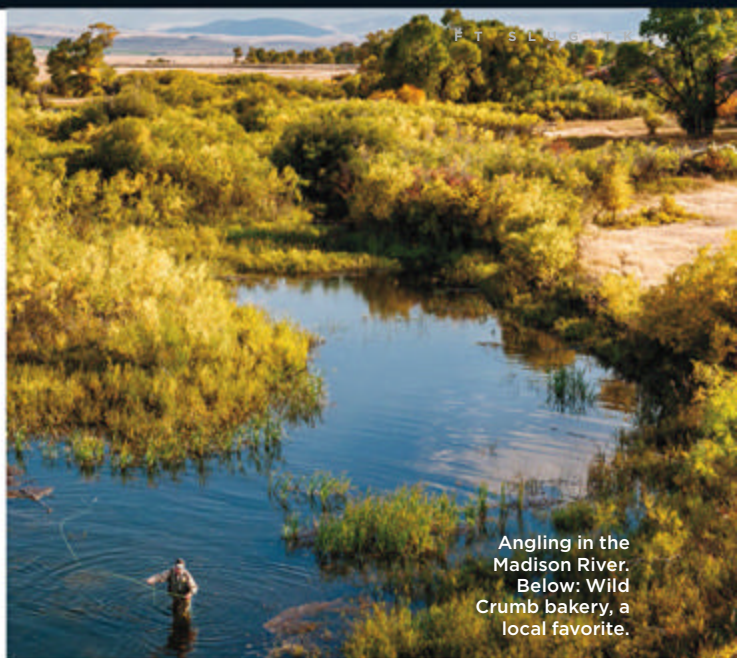
In this town of 11,000 in the heart of Sonoma County's wine country, food is topic number one — whether it's the seasonal 11-course tasting menu at Single Thread Farms or one of the 10 varieties of garlic you scored at the farmers market. The city's quaint central square is home to dozens of tasting rooms and fine restaurants. And you can burn off those calories by running or cycling in the nearby hills.

## → Asheville, North Carolina

For fun, the 87,000 residents of this mellow enclave hike to the summit of Mount Pisgah or browse the galleries along the French Broad River. And they eat. The city has 10 farmers markets and an abundance of chefs mingling the best elements of Southern cuisine and farm-to-table cooking. For non-carnivores, the town's hippie culture and great ingredients add up to very tasty vegetarian and vegan fare.

## → Richmond

This bastion of the Old South — complete with cobblestoned streets and blocks of historic row houses — has seen an influx of young newcomers attracted by a strong economy and the bike-friendly, DIY vibe. With easy access to Virginia's fertile farms and rugged coast, chefs here are adding modern twists to Southern classics, like the black-eyed pea falafel at Pasture and the wood-fired Virginia scallops at Rappahannock.



Angling in the Madison River. Below: Wild Crumb bakery, a local favorite.



## The Case for Missoula

As Bozeman booms with newfound tech wealth, Missoula remains true to its humble roots as a haunt for Forest Service employees, University of Montana undergrads, and wildland firefighters. Homes are affordable — a 1925 Craftsman in town goes for around \$250,000 — and the vibe is decidedly down-home: Think dives like the Oxford Saloon, where chicken-fried steak is the breakfast special and a daily poker game has a \$300 pot limit. "Pretentious people don't last long here," says Brent Ruby, co-founder of the energy bar company Omnibar.





Crossing Lake Champlain on the Burlington Bike Path. Below: Crow Bookshop, downtown



## BURLINGTON, VERMONT

SMALL-TOWN VIBE, TECH-CITY SAVVY.

**ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO**, Paul Budnitz pulled up stakes and moved to Burlington, Vermont. Nothing unusual about that — this city of 42,000 on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain has long attracted outdoorsy young families. What is unusual is where Budnitz moved from: Boulder, Colorado.

You don't often hear of people fleeing Colorado's technology

and outdoors mecca. But Budnitz, founder of the grown-up toy company Kidrobot and the handmade bicycle manufacturer Budnitz Bicycles, didn't care for the way his city was changing. "It started to feel too Silicon Valley-ish — quite wealthy and getting more so," he says. So he moved to Burlington.

Not only was he able to find investors for his social-media venture, Ello, Budnitz also discovered the kind of community he thought no longer existed. "Working in Vermont helps inspire original thinking," he says. "Vermont is the America that didn't get screwed up. It's just doing its thing — either 40 years behind or 40 years ahead of everyone else, depending how you look at it."

Burlington, of

course, has always attracted a certain kind of seeker. Think Bernie Sanders, Jake Burton, or Ben and Jerry, out-of-towners (or "flatlanders," as they're known here) with big ideas about community, food, business, and the environment, who successfully turned Burlington into the U.S. capital of sustainability. It still gets its share of shaggy-haired dreamers (and ski bums), but today's migrants are more like Budnitz — tech-savvy but laid-back, in search of a place where you can sell globally while enjoying an actual life locally.

Dan White, for instance, left a job at Groupon in Chicago four years ago to launch a deal site in Burlington. "I have a nice walk to work instead of commuting an hour and a half every day, and I can break out at five o'clock for drinks," he says. "I think about all those hours I'm taking back each week — pure moments of relaxation." If he needs to travel, the city's airport has direct flights to cities like New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. And if he is craving some culture, Montreal is only a two-hour-long drive away.

White, who is not married, lives in an apartment downtown. Families flock to neighborhoods like South End, where

DAVID  
BRADBURY

48, technology  
investor

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# The Devil's Obstacle Course





Madagascar's Tsingy  
de Bemaraha,  
the most inaccessible  
part of the world's  
most remote country.

THE INTERIOR OF MADAGASCAR IS RINGED BY RAZOR-SHARP ROCK, IMPENETRABLE JUNGLE, AND INVISIBLE PERILS THAT EVEN SEASONED EXPLORERS DREAD. NO WONDER MORE MEN HAVE BEEN TO THE MOON.

BY **MARK ADAMS** • PHOTOGRAPHS BY **GEORGE KOUROUNIS**



“This place is almost completely inaccessible, an actual no-man’s-land!” Simon Donato was explaining over the telephone. He was going on an expedition to this remote spot halfway around the world, a chunk of rocky forest near Madagascar’s west central coast called the Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve, and I was hoping to join him. “Right now, we probably know more

about what isn’t in there than what is. No trails. No infrastructure. It isn’t really visible even on Google Maps, because of its tree cover.”

The opportunity to plant one’s boots on terra incognita doesn’t come along every day. I happened to be particularly susceptible to the allure of Simon’s great escape, after several months of seven-day weeks spent staring at a computer screen under fluorescent lights, finishing a long-overdue book. Of course, getting away from it all isn’t as simple as it once was, now that the chief qualification to climb Everest is a large checking account balance, and luxury cruisers to Antarctica can snap penguin-packed selfies without having to miss their predinner cocktails. Africa is probably the continent most mysterious to North Americans. Madagascar, the massive island nation sometimes called the Eighth Continent because of the uniqueness and diversity of its flora and fauna, is Africa’s Africa — an even less-known place. Which makes the Tsingy, as Winston Churchill once said of another strange land, a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

Simon’s proposal certainly sounded intriguing. Kensington Tours, a high-end travel company, sponsors a team of serious adventurers it calls Explorers in Residence. For Madagascar, Kensington had assembled a power trio of its most popular EIRs and was sending them to one of the planet’s last unmapped regions. Simon is a world-class ultra-endurance athlete, holds a Ph.D. in geology, and stars in the run-till-you-drop television show *Boundless*. EIR George Kourounis is a self-described stormchaser who travels the world trying to get closer to the sorts of natural disasters that sane people flee: tornadoes, hurricanes, avalanches.

*Mark Adams wrote a profile of author Peter Matthiessen in the June issue. He is the author of, most recently, Meet Me in Atlantis.*

He’d recently given his job description as, “If it wants to kill you, I’m there.” And since Madagascar is perhaps best known for its lemurs, the third EIR would be Travis Steffens, a.k.a. “the Lemur Guy,” a primatologist, ecologist, and all-around expert on Madagascar’s wildlife and culture. An additional team of specialists chosen by Simon would be assisting in drawing the first detailed maps of the area’s namesake *tsingy*.

I couldn’t help noticing, however, that people weren’t exactly begging to get into the *tsingy*, either — perhaps because it is a gigantic labyrinth of razor-sharp limestone, tens of thousands of acres in size, off-limits to tourists and pretty much everyone else. And even though the overwhelming consensus at my home was that Daddy needed to go away, alone, for a little while, it was equally clear that due to the usual day-to-day commitments of an adult American male, any trip I took to Madagascar or anywhere else would be my last for some time. I needed to make the most of it. The narrator in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* frequently came to mind, a man slogging “midway along life’s journey,” who knows he can purge midlife malaise only by voyaging really far outside of his comfort zone. If I was making a similar all-in travel bet on my mental health, were the lemurs and limestone labyrinth of Madagascar my best option?

After checking the local news in Madagascar — it seemed a good sign that the skies of the capital city, Antananarivo, were temporarily darkened by a biblical swarm of locusts — I spoke with George, the stormchaser, who knew a thing or two about extreme escapism. His Twitter feed read like a social-media adaptation of Dante’s *Inferno*. He’d been to Chernobyl, had paddled a rubber raft across a lake of sulfuric acid, and was currently starring in a viral video in which he dons a fireproof suit and lowers himself into a very active volcano. He also possessed the one skill essential in a



Loading up the Toyota for a mission to rescue three team members who got lost in the field



A ring-tailed lemur and her cub. Lemurs are Madagascar’s main tourist attraction.

writer’s traveling companion since Dante paired his narrator with the Roman poet Virgil — he spoke in perfect sound bites. I asked George if he thought this adventure was the real deal.

“There are 7 billion people on this earth,” George said, “but pretty much every step we take will be someplace no human has stood before.”

Done. I was going to Madagascar.

**MADAGASCAR HAS BEEN** a far-out place, in every sense, since breaking off from what is now the Indian peninsula 88 million years ago. Because of its isolation, about 90 percent of Madagascar’s plants and animals (including nearly all known species of lemurs) are endemic, found no place else on Earth. Madagascar was one of the globe’s last places settled by humans, probably around the lifetime of Jesus Christ, give or

LEMURS: ROBIN BROOKS



A photograph of three men standing outdoors in front of a rocky wall. The man on the left is wearing a white helmet with a headlamp and a white t-shirt, holding the left side of a flag. The man in the middle is wearing a green bucket hat and a white t-shirt. The man on the right is wearing a white helmet with a headlamp and a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, holding the right side of the flag. The flag is white with a red triangle on the left and a blue triangle on the right. It features two red circular logos: one with a stylized 'C' and another with a star-like design. The background shows a rocky wall and some greenery.

From left: Adventure racer Jim Mandelli, endurance athlete-TV host Simon Donato, and the Lemur Guy, primatologist Travis Steffens

From left: Adventure racer Jim Mandelli, endurance athlete-TV host Simon Donato, and the Lemur Guy, primatologist Travis Steffens

Madagascar was a French colony from the late 1800s until 1960 — including a brief period, following the fall of Paris to the Nazis, when the Third Reich seriously explored shipping millions of European Jews to the island. The lingering French influence means not only that the local croissants are flaky and any taxi you hail in Antananarivo will probably be an ancient put-put Citroën, but also that the U.S. is not — as it is in so many other places these days — the hegemonic international power that everyone quietly resents. An American who lands in Antananarivo is more likely to hear civic boasting about the impressive new U.S. Embassy building than grumbling over suspected CIA activity. The culture shock of arriving in Madagascar can be a little overwhelming, and its inhabitants are politely chatty, so should you

**4. ZEBUS.** This breed of cattle is revered not only as a work animal and source of meat and milk but as a symbol of wealth and status, a shadow currency, a sacrifice to the razana. Zebus (and their poo) are everywhere in Madagascar. A Malagasy either owns zebus or aspires to do so. Unfortunately, zebus eat a lot of grass, which leads to a lot of forest destruction, a big reason why lemurs are so endangered.

The Madagascar trip was Simon's idea, as the head of Adventure Science, an organization he founded to bring together scientists and superfit outdoorsy types to conduct exploratory research in extreme conditions. A few team members had departed earlier to set up base camp.

During our drive across the mostly roadless plains, our two-truck convoy was





One of the few bridges that traverse the tsingy

enough of a novelty that each time we passed a small cluster of homes, smiling children ran out to watch us drive by and shouted, “*Salaama, vazaha!*” (“Hello, white people!”) Because gangs of zebu rustlers were known to roam the area, we had two armed gendarmes with us, indistinguishable from our hired guides in their non-uniforms of shorts, sandals, and T-shirts. Our passenger-seat navigator, Claude, stood out for his personal style — he wore a pink Jacques Cousteau watch cap with a T-shirt announcing THE LOVE DOCTOR IS IN — as well as for his ability to spot the invisible path through the rocky terrain. The beach-bum dress code camouflaged the fact that these were skilled professionals — zebu owners, many of them trilingual. Their leader, Mamy Razafitsalama, might have been mistaken for an American high schooler in his NBA gear, but he had degrees in anthropology, evolutionary biology, and primatology.

When we arrived at base camp, we were immediately reminded of just how removed from civilization we were. EIRs Simon and Travis, along with Jim Mandelli, an elite adventure racer, had ventured a bit too far on a recon mission into the rocky tsingy, where they were now stuck without food or water. In another 24 hours, their situation would be life-threatening. After a brief consultation with Keith, the base camp manager, three Adventure Science guys who’d just arrived with me began pulling medical gear and

**“There are 7 billion people on Earth, but every step we take will be someplace no human has stood before.”**

climbing equipment out of backpacks, to mount a search-and-rescue mission. Long after sundown, they solemnly continued to check ropes and harnesses and plotted possible routes into the mysterious tsingy. A trip that had begun as a lark was drifting toward *Into Thin Air* territory. One team member told me, unsmilingly, “This must be great material for a writer.”

Thanks to the modern miracle of wireless communication — yes, even the tsingy has cellular service — the rescue operation was called off the next morning when the Malagasy military airlifted the strandeers out by helicopter. The crisis having passed, it quickly became clear that any chilly vibrations I’d been picking up from Simon’s Adventure Science teammates had actually been a combination of pre-mission focus and jet lag. Tyler LeBlanc was a sweet kid who worked as a paramedic in Medicine Hat, Alberta. In addition to performing the usual emergency lifesaving services, he had recently treated 17 unfortunate teenagers who had been doused in a drive-by bear spraying.

Ian MacNairn was a mountaineering specialist whose bushy auburn hair and beard, one teammate noted, recalled public-television speed painter Bob Ross. He was working on a Ph.D. dissertation examining the psychology of ultramarathoning (another of his hobbies) and walked around camp scribbling observations and doodles into a stack of Moleskines.

Tim Puetz was a former U.S. Army Ranger, a biomedical researcher at the National Institutes of Health who woke up at 3:30 each morning to train for extreme endurance races. In the evening he unwound by studying for an MBA. Tim was a walking reminder of how routine my life had become. I sulked because I didn’t get to see the rescue helicopter land; Tim had once been trapped on a mountain in Afghanistan, where no chopper could reach him, and sipped saline solution to survive. I congratulated myself for remembering to bring Clif bars; Tim had been trained to trap and cook snakes, rabbits, and squirrels. I’d brought a copy of *Heart of Darkness* to read on the plane; Tim had watched one commanding officer slowly







Seasoned stormchaser George Kourounis explores an unmapped cave.



An SUV crosses the Manambolo River.

succumb to PTSD until, like Colonel Kurtz, his methods became unsound.

Base camp was divided into two mini tent villages. The *vazaha* side was steps from a stream that Mamy, who was laid-back and agreeable even by the sky-high Malagasy standards of mellowness and amiability, assured me was crocodile-free. ("Crocodiles in Madagascar are not so dangerous," he added. "The only problem animal is the scorpion in the shoe.") The Malagasy side of camp housed the food-prep area where Nina, our chubby cook, prepared rice and stews on a table that also held a boom box playing Malagasy pop songs and two frequently replenished bottles of local rum. Mamy had rejected several skinny candidates for Nina's job, noting that they lacked corporeal evidence of their kitchen skills.

Between our twin cities stood two large expedition tents, soaked in so much mosquito-proofing that the bottle cap-size beetles that landed on the mesh were stunned immobile before dropping dead to the ground. It was here that Simon, fed

and rehydrated after his helicopter extraction, laid out the plan for the next several days. In the daytime, we would explore the mysteries of the tsingy. A large topo map of the Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve was taped behind him. A few tiny tic-tac-toe chicken scratches at its center represented the only sections of the limestone labyrinth known to have been surveyed.

"Actually, all of this is tsingy," Simon said, wiping his hand across the map.

Our scientific objectives, Simon explained, were to map the region, explore any new cave systems encountered, and conduct twice-daily lemur surveys with Travis. While the animals of Madagascar were by and large suitable for a petting zoo (lemurs, chameleons, Mamy's nonconfrontational crocodiles), everything else in the tsingy wanted your blood. "There's a reason no one's ever been in there," Simon said. "The rock is sharp, and the plants are sharp." The Malagasy word *tsingy* means "where one cannot walk barefoot."

Tyler, the medic, ran through a quick tutorial on tourniquets, reminded us to take our malaria pills, and gave pointers on avoiding trench foot.

"Didn't trench foot die out with the Ottoman Empire?" I asked.

"I've had trench foot, Mark," Tim said quietly. "You don't want trench foot." He'd had malaria, too.

In the morning, we set out for terra incognita. The mangroves that grew thick near our stream on piles of roots like stilts

soon gave way to dry deciduous forest, including some baobab trees, their tangled, leafless branches making them look as if they'd been planted upside-down. Perhaps not surprisingly, unexplored territory had a lot of vines. Even following the paths our guides hacked with machetes was like trying to walk through a 30-foot-tall bird's nest. We crossed a limestone field whose surface was a bas-relief of 200-million-year-old marine fossils. What I first took to be intact ancient nautilus shells turned out to be the baseball-size homes of giant snails. "Wear boots when you leave your tent at night," Travis warned. "They squish if you step on them. Kind of messy."

When we reached the outskirts of the tsingy, all the descriptions and warnings of its isolation suddenly made sense. The entire area that lay before us had once been a solid limestone landscape, which dissolved over eons into a bewildering structure of karst spires and caves. The rock was unlike any I'd ever seen — porous as sea sponges in some places, solid in others. Pointed fingers jutted out in all directions, like petrified flames. Frequently, we found ourselves walking atop knife-edged ridges of stone, the tips of which cracked beneath our boots with a champagne-toast clink. Most of the team, Ian especially, hopped from spike to spike like mountain goats; I used my thick (and quickly scarred) leather gloves to grab every handhold I could find. We would've been safer climbing walls topped with broken bottles.

"Watch out for false bridges," Simon shouted over his shoulder, describing the matted leaves that looked like solid ground but gave way like tissue paper when stepped on, exposing daggers of rock below. It was as if nature, unconvinced that its serrated stone forest made the KEEP OUT message clear, had booby-trapped the sanctuary's entryways with punji sticks, too. Keeping in mind an earlier warning that a stumble in such territory would likely result in a compound leg fracture as well as a wicked flesh wound — and that we had likely used up any favors from friends with helicopters — I tried to imitate Simon's precise steps as if learning a new dance.

I was standing with my notebook open, searching for words to describe what I was looking at, when George passed, carrying 30 pounds of photo and video equipment on his back. "This is like the devil's obstacle course," he said, glancing around, and moved on.

We snaked our way single file through slot canyons and crawled on our bellies through openings so narrow that we had to remove our daypacks and pass them ahead. Every few minutes what little path there was forked, and we had to choose the most promising route deeper into the labyrinth. As often as not, it terminated in a dead end. Every alleyway was its own unique ecosystem, some desert-like and sunny, others green and shaded. "The amazing thing is that 50 feet in either direction is something entirely different," Simon said, (continued on page 98)



A photograph of Taylor Branch, an older man with white hair, sitting in a black leather office chair. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and has his arms crossed. He is smiling slightly at the camera. To his left is a desk with several books stacked on it. The books include 'The King Years' by Taylor Branch, 'Pillar of Fire' by Taylor Branch, 'Parting the Waters' by Taylor Branch, 'Edge' by Taylor Branch, and 'Hands on the Freedom Plow' by Paul Finkelman. A framed picture of a historical scene is on the wall behind the books. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# THE MAN WHO SCHOOLED THE NCAA

**BEFORE HE CRUSADED AGAINST THE COLLEGE SPORTS INDUSTRY, TAYLOR  
WAS BILL CLINTON'S WHITE HOUSE CONFIDANT. THANKS**

BY **STEPHEN RODRICK** • PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC OGDEN





**T**AYLOR BRANCH watches college basketball differently than most folks. You watch in your raggedy college hoodie be-seeching a 19-year-old to hit his free throws. Branch sees that same kid as an athletic share-cropper unable to afford a late-night meal at Taco Bell while the NCAA rakes in many millions on the back of his labor.

You see your team's zone defense shut down your rival's sharpshooters and you start belting out the alma mater. Branch sees the systemic abuse of so-called student-athletes force-fed worthless diplomas so they can concentrate on bringing the university glory on the playing field. You see the rise of a Kobe-esque swingman, while Branch sees a young man who isn't even allowed to profit from his own signature.

Yeah, Branch isn't exactly Dick Vitale on the pure athletic joy level, but here's the thing: He's exactly right, and he'd like to explain exactly why to your favorite collegiate athletic director.

Frankly, the 68-year-old Branch is an unlikely crusader for justice in college sports. The subject seems like a relatively small issue for a Pulitzer Prize-winning author of a seminal trilogy on the civil rights movement and confidant of President Bill Clinton. But Branch's 2011 story for *The Atlantic*, called "The Shame of College Sports," which later expanded into an e-book titled *The Cartel*, forever changed the perception of the NCAA and its treatment of the young men who fill its coffers. Branch effectively killed the illusion of the NCAA as a benevolent organization looking out for kids whose athletic skills earn them a college education.

One of the first things Branch did in reporting the story was read the autobiography of Walter Byers, the man who essentially created the modern NCAA, turned it into a moneymaking institution, and then, in his declining years, admitted that athletes were getting ripped off. Byers' regrets inspired Branch to dig deep into the inequities that most student-athletes face in modern sports and the Kremlin-like bureaucracy that enforces its rules with impunity. But it wasn't until he met with an old friend that Branch realized the depth of depravity he was facing.

He called on William Friday, the former president of the University of North Carolina, Branch's alma mater, and a mentor. Branch recalls Friday's marching orders. "He told me: 'Taylor, don't mess this up. Get in there and fix it. Give the university back to Socrates, where it belongs. We're being washed over by money. We shut the univer-

**BRANCH CHRONICLED THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND TO HIM, YOU MAY NEVER WATCH MARCH MADNESS THE SAME WAY AGAIN.**



sity down at four on a Wednesday afternoon if ESPN says we've got to play football that night. We've totally lost our minds."

From that point Branch was on a mission. "Taylor hates injustice of any kind," says Daniel Okrent, a longtime friend and sometime publisher. "He gets so close, so immersed, he sees things another writer doesn't see."

In a way, injustice has been the theme of Branch's three major projects: With his civil rights writing, Branch humanized the characters, major and minor, who had been demonized for demanding progress. With Clinton, Branch was led by his vexation that a hugely flawed but good-hearted man was impeached over sexual charges brought on by a rogue investigation into a land deal. With the NCAA, it is disgust at the institution's sharecropper way of treating its athletes.

Public reaction to Branch's 15,000-word opus was cathartic; famed sportswriter Frank Deford said it "may well be the most important article ever written about college sports." Change hasn't come overnight, but eyes are now wide open, thanks at least in part to Branch's story. Last July, Branch testified before the U.S. Senate, ripping the NCAA a new one. He began by dispelling the notion that the ancient Greeks, whom the Olympics cite as the first amateurs, were not compensated for their achievements. Branch ended by imploring lawmakers to "make the athletes true citizens rather than glorified vassals in college sports."

In *The Cartel*, Branch recounted the history of the NCAA, a nonprofit institution that now has more than 500 employees and more than 200,000 feet of office space, all largely funded by the organization's slice of the billions generated by college-sports television deals. He detailed athletes banned from the College World Series for merely talking to an agent, players shunted off to academic majors that ensured high graduation rates but little education, and tutors and administrators happy to do anything to keep their top athletes eligible, whatever the price.

Even NCAA apologists admit his report has merit, but they argue there's simply no equitable way to compensate athletes at more than 300 Division I schools that have 300 different bottom lines and where only football and men's basketball are generally profitable. And what about the poor water polo players? The badminton star?

STEPHEN RODRICK is a contributing editor. He wrote about Michael Strahan in the January/February issue.

But Branch is a historian first and a journalist second, and he notes that throughout history, injustice inevitably reaches a tipping point, even if a practical solution hasn't yet been reached. He points to the Civil War and the economic boom that slavery made possible. "Abolitionists were seen as people who were indifferent to practicality and were driven by principle, and that's this tension," says Branch. "Here's the question: Do you adjust your principles to practicality, or do you adjust practicality to principle?"



From top: Branch as a high school tight end in Georgia, 1963; working with the president in the Oval Office, 1993

**WITH BILL CLINTON**, Branch has had a window seat at the same battle. The principle began back when he was 25, when Branch worked on the ultimate quixotic pursuit: the 1972 George McGovern campaign in Texas, and shared a dormlike downtown Austin apartment with a couple named Hillary Rodham and Bill Clinton. The odds of McGovern's winning were astronomical (Nixon ended up crushing McGovern in Texas), but each day the three worked from dawn to midnight and then, exhausted, might order a pizza and have a beer before waking up and doing it again.

"It was less fantasy McGovern would win than it was guilt," remembers Branch.

"It was, 'What if this should happen, and the election could be close, and it could get close even in Texas?' So we'd get up the next morning and keep going."

The practical began a generation later. Branch watched from a distance as the Clintons moved across the country during the 1992 campaign. At first the more idealistic Branch was leery of the moderate Clinton. But on the eve of the inauguration, Branch found himself contributing ideas to the new president's speech. Afterward, Clinton called to ask if they could meet occasionally

and tape their conversations for historical purposes. Over the next eight years, Branch might receive a call at 7 PM, asking him to drive down from Baltimore to meet the president at 9. They would talk for two or three hours; Branch would leave the tapes with Clinton and record his own recollections on his drive home.

Branch learned one of the clichés from Clinton's election — that it marked the end of America's battle over the 1960s — was exactly wrong. The 1960s weren't dead; they weren't even the past. Clinton's pollsters could predict with 80 percent accuracy how people were going to vote on a particular issue by asking one question: "On balance, do you think the 1960s were bad for Americans?" If a respondent said the Sixties were bad, then he or she would vote Republican. If one said they were good, he or she would vote Democratic. Branch thinks the Right's vitriol over how the Sixties changed America drove the hatred for the Clintons and now fuels the hatred of Barack Obama. "Some people are still fighting the last war," says Branch.

Branch thinks the NCAA is equally stuck in the past. He hasn't been alone in his cries for NCAA reform. Joe Nocera, at the *New York Times*, has touched on similar themes, arguing that the millions in profits need to be given to the "value creators" — that is, the athletes. Meanwhile, Jay Bilas, a former Duke basketball player and current ESPN announcer, tweeted pictures of Florida State selling Jameis Winston jerseys while Winston was being investigated for profiting off autographs. But Branch's piece in *The Atlantic* took the issue to a wider audience.

"The importance of something like Taylor's article was that it got so much attention outside of the usual circle," says Geoff Silver, an executive who left the NCAA last year. He says Branch's piece was read closely inside NCAA headquarters. "It moved the issue outside of the general demographics



of people who care about these things and brought it to a much larger audience.”

Popular awareness is rising on the NCAA's profiting from the labor of a volunteer workforce, and the wheels of justice are slowly beginning to turn. A long-delayed court case brought by former UCLA hoopster Ed O'Bannon and other players seeking compensation from the NCAA for using their likenesses in video games went the players' way last September. (The NCAA is appealing.) Football players at Northwestern University have started a movement to unionize. The University of Southern California pledged to honor scholarships for four years, a rollback of the ugly secret that most athletic scholarships can be yanked at the end of any school year for any reason.

But scrutiny doesn't always lead to change. Like any bureaucracy, the NCAA doesn't cede power willingly. In November, Georgia star running back Todd Gurley took the field against Auburn in Athens, Georgia, before 93,000 paying customers. It was Gurley's first game in a month — he'd been suspended for receiving more than \$3,000 from memorabilia dealers for daring to sign his own name on helmets and jerseys. He had to sit out four games, donate a portion of the \$3,000 to charity, and perform 40 hours of community service. In other words, the NCAA treated him like a criminal.

Gurley was rust-free on his return, rushing for 138 yards and looking like the All-American he was before the suspension. Then, with five minutes to go, Gurley's left knee buckled, tearing his ACL. The injury ended his season and probably dropped him lower in the NFL draft, all while playing for free. His future in football was in doubt, but one thing was clear: He owed the NCAA 40 hours of community service.

Taylor Branch just shook his head at the story. “I think most people think that it was wrong, what happened to Gurley,” says Branch in his soft Southern voice. “But fans don't take the next step and say, ‘By God, what right is it of colleges to prohibit income that doesn't even come from them?’ To say you can't sign an autograph, where do they get off saying that? Those rules are bogus.”

**BRANCH HAS BECOME** a sort of Don Quixote of student-athlete rights, traveling the country and taking his denunciation of the NCAA's plantation-style management to the masses. Well, if not the masses, then the people who think about these things at conferences and hold Senate hearings. In November, Branch, who lives in Baltimore, put aside an essay he was writing on Lyndon Johnson biographer Robert Caro's views on LBJ and race so he could travel to the University of Michigan to speak at a conference, “The Values of College Sport.”

Few campuses are more qualified to hold such a symposium than U of M, where eight Nobel laureates have labored and banners celebrating the Fab Five, one of college

basketball's most storied 1990s teams, are kept in a basement because a player received loans from a booster while the university and Nike made millions of dollars from their labors. Michigan is one of the top five public universities in the country, and its current athletes spend much of their time separated from other students on the school's Athletics Campus, near sports arenas like the Big House, a.k.a. the football stadium, which holds 110,000 fans and generates millions in gate receipts six Saturdays a year.

The value of college sports, at least the commerce component, had recently dropped precipitously in Ann Arbor, as the football team suffered through one of its worst seasons in years and students marched on university president Mark Schlissel's house to demand the athletic director's dismissal after a clearly addled quarterback was thrown back into an already lost game. By conference time, the athletic director had cleared out his office, and the football coach was just weeks away from being fired. Meanwhile, Schlissel had

## “What right is it of colleges to prohibit income that doesn't even come from them?”

just walked back remarks on football's outsize influence at the school, not because the questions weren't valid, but because they were words that dare not be spoken aloud.

Branch continues to voice the unpopular truth, even at his alma mater. The scandal unfolding at the University of North Carolina involves hundreds of student-athletes (a term Branch despises — “We don't call young musicians ‘student-musicians,’ or young scientists ‘student-scientists’; it's condescending”) who took sham no-show classes to maintain eligibility with the happy complicity of instructors and tutors looking to please coaches, and bean counters hoping to keep studs eligible and turnstiles turning.

Branch had seen it all before. Universities forcefully direct athletes into majors that allow more time for athletics. Michigan Fab Five member Jimmy King spoke at the conference, where he told an all-too-common story: He was steered away from a business major by advisers who thought it would be too taxing on his hoop work.

Tired after a day of travel and an afternoon of speaking to an African-American history graduate seminar, Branch still offered

a stem-winder. His talk touched on now-familiar themes: athletes unable to profit from their own signatures, athletes banned from competition for merely consulting an agent, and NCAA penalties falling hardest on teens with no guilt. He even mentioned that the sanctions applied to Penn State after the Jerry Sandusky pedophilia scandal primarily affected kids coming to play for the university in scholarship reductions and bowl sanctions.

“They punished high school students who didn't have anything to do with it,” said Branch as some attendees squirmed in their seats.

The conference ended for the day, and Branch and I headed out for dinner. It takes much to outrage Branch — years of investigating FBI and police skulduggery targeting the civil rights movement and listening to Bill Clinton explain Monica Lewinsky tends to make a person hard to shock — but there was something about academia's refusal to engage on giving players the same rights other students enjoy that pissed him off.

“The part that gets a little frustrating is where I can't get people to say, ‘How do you justify doing this?’” said Branch, his voice rising slowly. A few diners looked over as the polite-looking man got slightly agitated. He sighed and stirred his rice. “I literally cannot get anybody to answer that question.” He laughed a small laugh. “They don't even want to hear the question.”

**THE TOUGH QUESTIONS** were not a part of Branch's childhood. He grew up in Atlanta during the 1950s and 1960s, as the civil rights movement roiled around him; *Brown v. Board of Education* came down when he was in first grade, and the Freedom Rides were happening as he entered high school. These issues were not talked about at home. He started working at his dad's dry cleaners when he was five, and most of his father's employees were black, but he never saw their homes or their lives outside the building.

But when he was around 10, one of his father's most beloved workers died, and Branch went to the man's funeral.

“I'd never been in a black church before, and people were falling over and getting hysterical,” remembers Branch. “I thought they were having heart attacks. And then they said, ‘We'd like Mr. Branch to speak.’ It was the only speech I ever saw him give. And he started telling jokes about the deceased and talking about what he meant to him. And he broke down at the pulpit.”

It was the first time Branch had seen his dad cry. While Branch doesn't directly trace his passion about civil rights to that service, it was an awakening moment that followed him through high school and college. “I'd never been part of it, but it had been all around my whole childhood, staring at me from across the street,” he says.

He ended up going to the University of North Carolina, and then Princeton for graduate school, and (continued on page 102)





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# GEAR LAB

by ERIK SOFGE

## An Expert's Guide to the Connected Home



A growing number of WiFi-connected devices allows you to monitor and adjust your home from

anywhere. We tested dozens of products that control climate, lighting, and security — even a new generation of “smart” appliances — to find out which ones are worth investing in now.

---







## Climate

These items make controlling temperatures at home easier — plus they help save money and energy.

### THE SELF-ADJUSTING FAN

The elegant and intelligent **Big Ass Fan Haiku with SenseME** automatically turns on when someone enters a room, adjusts speed based on temperature and humidity, and over time anticipates your needs, changing settings based on comfort preferences. It can also be adjusted via smartphone, and the Haiku communicates with Nest thermostats (see below), to work along with heat and A/C. From \$1,045; [bigassfans.com](http://bigassfans.com)

### The Evolved A/C Unit

If you don't have central A/C and a smart thermostat, the WiFi-connected **Quirky Aros Smart Air Conditioner** offers most of the same features. It can turn on when you're close to home (thanks to your phone's GPS), and it adjusts to match your preferences (warmer at night, etc.). Its noise and performance are on par with those of other 8,000 Btu units we've tried — and it's definitely the best-looking. \$279; [quirky.com](http://quirky.com)

### The Leak-Detection System

Homeowners shouldn't ignore the dangers of leaks and blooming mold, and **WallyHome** is a simple way to stay in front of both hazards. The six sensors can be placed anywhere around the house — including the basement (they use your home's existing wiring to communicate with a hub) — and you'll be warned via an alert on your smartphone if any issues arise, before the damage occurs. \$299; [wallyhome.com](http://wallyhome.com)

### The Thermostats That Do More Than Set Temperature

If there is one connected home device that is a must-own right now, it's a thermostat. **Nest Learning Thermostat** (\$249; [store.nest.com](http://store.nest.com)) revolutionized the once-ignored appliance with a bright screen, intuitive interface, and built-in motion sensors that make HVAC control better — and sexier. The Nest lets you adjust the temperature with your phone, and, after about four days, it can create a profile of your habits and set itself automatically. The comparably cool **Honeywell Lyric** (\$279; [lyric.honeywell.com](http://lyric.honeywell.com)) has one great feature the Nest doesn't: It uses your smartphone's GPS to know when you're on your way home. That means on its own the Lyric sets the temperature exactly how you like it before you pull into the driveway.



### HOW MUCH MONEY CAN YOU SAVE?

By automatically creating its own schedule based on when and how high (or low) you set it, the Nest Learning Thermostat can save the average homeowner up to \$145 annually. In addition to cutting

back on heating and cooling while you're at work, the Nest detects whether your home has been empty for longer than usual (if you're on vacation, for example), and shifts to even thrifter temperature settings. And a Winter Mode on Haiku with SenseME ceiling fans could cut annual heating costs even further, saving you as much as an additional \$200. The new cold-weather setting will spin the fan faster when it senses the room is unoccupied, drawing down more hot air without subjecting anyone to wind chill.

PREVIOUS PAGE: "WASHING MACHINE" ICON BY SAGIT MILSHTEN FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "CAMERA" ICON BY MARTHA ORMISTON FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "FAN" ICON BY SIKI DANH FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "OVEN" ICON BY NATHAN THOMSON FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "KEY" ICON BY LISA STAUDINGER FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "LIGHT BULB" ICON BY EMA DIMITROVA FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "WATER DROP" ICON BY PAVEL PAVLOV FROM THE NOUN PROJECT; "PLUG" ICON BY SEBASTIAN LANGER FROM THE NOUN PROJECT



# Lighting

Connected bulbs and outlets make it easy to schedule your lights when you're out of town and to adjust them for any occasion. We found the three best solutions that fit any home.



## BEST FOR **ONE ROOM** Philips Hue Lux LED Bulbs

The Hue Lux is the easiest way to experiment with smartphone- or tablet-controlled lighting — and you'll be glad you did. It's simple to install (screw in a bulb and plug in a bridge), and the results are immediately useful. Using the intuitive app, we set lights to turn on and off when we were on vacation and dimmed a lamp in the kid's room to a night-light glow from the couch. *\$100 for two bulbs and a bridge; meethue.com*



## BEST FOR **A SINGLE LAMP** WeMo Switch

This all-in-one device makes any outlet WiFi-connected, meaning you can turn a lamp or anything else plugged into it on or off remotely with your smartphone or tablet. With an app called IFTTT (*free; ifttt.com*), you can get creative: We programmed a space heater to turn on when the weather dipped below 40 degrees. *\$50; belkin.com*

## BEST FOR **THE WHOLE HOUSE** CONNECTED CREE LED BULB

At just \$15 a pop, Cree's newest LED fixtures are the best way to put smart bulbs all over the house. You'll need a separately sold Wink Hub (*\$50; wink.com*) to control them, but that's a worthy investment (see "The Best Way to Control a Smart Home," below). Our favorite operation was turning off all the lights in the house at bedtime from one place. *\$15; creebulb.com*



## THE BEST WAY TO CONTROL A SMART HOME

A single hub can operate several devices.

There's a downside to getting hooked on smart devices: Your phone quickly becomes even more littered with apps, and you wind up swiping through an array of different interfaces to do things that were once controlled by simple physical switches. This problem is not lost on

developers. The best solution we've found so far is Wink. The free app is a single interface that works with multiple products, including many featured here (Nest Learning Thermostat, Quirky Aros Smart Air Conditioner, Philips and Cree connected LEDs, and more). The company also makes a cool piece of hardware called the Wink Relay (*\$300, wink.com*), left. It's a touchscreen panel that you install on your wall. Once it's set up, you can use the hub to interact with several devices,

and stop hunting for your smartphone every time you want to dim the lights or adjust the thermostat. Nest Labs has another approach for controlling these devices called Works With Nest. If you already use the company's thermostat, there are a growing number of products that communicate with that device directly. For example, if you wear a Jawbone UP24 (*\$130; jawbone.com*), the fitness tracker can send a signal to your Nest to start warming up the house when you wake up.








## Security

These devices link to a home network and make security and keyless entry simple.

### KEEP WATCH WHEN YOU'RE NOT HOME

A closer look at the best WiFi security cams available.

		
NAME		
<b>DropCam Pro</b> \$199; <a href="http://dropcam.com">dropcam.com</a>	<b>Piper nv</b> \$269; <a href="http://getpiper.com">getpiper.com</a>	<b>Withings Home</b> \$200; <a href="http://withings.com">withings.com</a>
WHAT IS IT?		
A no-frills, easy-to-set-up home security camera with night vision.	A full-featured security cam that also monitors home vitals like temperature.	An attractive WiFi camera that also keeps tabs on air quality.
WHY YOU WANT IT		
If you're looking for basic security — or even a way to keep an eye on the dog — it's hard to beat the reasonably priced DropCam Pro. Setup could not be easier — plug it in, join a WiFi network, and start watching live video from a smartphone, tablet, or computer. DropCam can also send alerts when it detects sound or movement. With an optional Cloud Recording Plan (\$10 a month), you can save seven days of footage to the DropCam servers, which you can review at any time.	No WiFi security camera can cover a room like Piper nv. It has a large 180-degree field of view, day or night, and allows you to remotely pan and zoom. You can install up to five units around the house and monitor footage through an app, which lets you view all the streams at once. There are temperature and humidity sensors in addition to those for light and motion. With Piper we felt confident we were getting a complete sense of what was happening at home when we were out.	Although it's not the best security camera — it doesn't have the ability to save HD video — the Home has the benefit of good looks and a cool bonus feature: The camera's frame incorporates real wood, and its air-quality sensor can detect volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released by things like cleaning products, which can irritate the nose, eyes, and throat. It's a feature we found excessive until we started testing and realized it's nice to be reminded to open the window from time to time.



### The Lust-Worthy Smoke and CO Detector

Nest Labs knows how much you hate traditional, high-maintenance detectors' easily spooked sensors and ear-piercing alarms. So along with responding to the first whiff of smoke or CO with a calm, verbal alert before escalating to louder sounds, the **Nest Protect** sends notifications to your phone. You can also use the app to remotely check battery levels and run periodic tests. \$99; [store.nest.com](http://store.nest.com)



### The Best Way to Never Forget to Close the Garage

The easily installed **Chamberlain MyQ Garage** adds smartphone control to most existing garage door openers. That means you can remotely double-check that the door is down long after you get to work. Additionally, the ability to open or close the garage from anywhere means a neighbor can return a yard tool even when you're not around. \$130, [chamberlain.com](http://chamberlain.com)



**KEYLESS LOCKS ARE NOT AS COOL AS THEY SEEM**

Smart locks are a brilliant idea — in theory. Allowing approved smartphones to unlock the door means not having to worry about misplacing your key or giving spares to family members or babysitters. But what happens when someone can't make the connection via Bluetooth, or the lock's four AA batteries go dead? We think the **August Smart Lock** (\$250; [august.com](http://august.com)) and similar models turn a time-tested mechanical device into a tech-support crisis waiting to happen.



# ARE SMART APPLIANCES READY FOR PRIME TIME?

It's trendy for manufacturers to put internet connectivity in everything, but the benefits to run-of-the-mill appliances are few and far between.



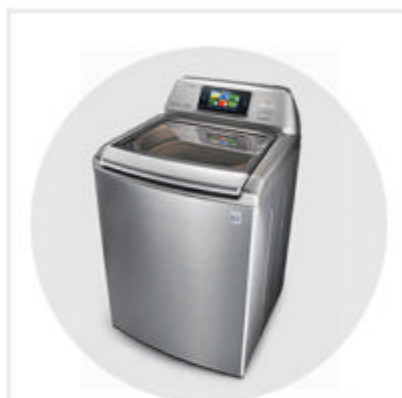
## CONNECTED HOME GEAR

can excel at monitoring and adjusting your environment. But when it comes to smartening up appliances, most of the current options fall short. The **GE Profile Series 30" Free-Standing Electric Convection Range** (\$1,400; [products.geappliances.com](http://products.geappliances.com)) lets you preheat before you get home, a feature as underwhelming as it is dangerously unwise.

Other products graft gadgetry onto products without actually changing how they function. The **Samsung 4-Door Refrigerator with 8" Wi-Fi Enabled LCD** (\$3,599; [samsung.com](http://samsung.com)) has a built-in touchscreen that lets you check news headlines and stream music with Pandora. Plus, if you sync it with a Samsung Galaxy smartphone, you can make calls from your fridge. Every one of this model's so-called smart features can be done better with the tablet or smartphone that's probably already sitting on the kitchen counter.

And the upcoming **Miele 48-Inch Dual Fuel Range** (\$TBD; [mieleusa.com](http://mieleusa.com)) can receive data from an application called Chef Watson, which uses artificial intelligence to come up with inventive recipes for whatever ingredients you have lying around. But why bother tying this sci-fi functionality to

an appliance when the same recipes can be viewed online? And that's not even taking into consideration the range's huge price tag.



## WORTH IT

The only class of smart appliance we heartily recommend are connected washers and dryers, like the **LG WT6001HV Smart ThinQ Washer** (\$1,700; [lg.com](http://lg.com)). It texts you when the wash is done, so you'll never forget to move a load to the dryer, and, cooler still, it uses custom cycle recipes (from an online database) to deal with specific stains and fabrics.

## THE MORE EFFICIENT WAY TO WATER THE LAWN

Just in time for spring — a smart device that can save time and money.



The WiFi-connected **Rachio Iro** (\$249, [rach.io](http://rach.io)) allows you to schedule sprinkler operation from your smartphone, but more interestingly, it can delay or decrease watering based on real-time conditions (if it's going to rain, there's no need for extra irrigating) and use custom watering cycles that match your region's soil composition. The system also gives you precise stats on water used — and saved. In fact, the Iro can cut the average customer's outdoor water usage by 20 to 30 percent, saving thousands of gallons of water per year.

## COMING SOON

## EVERYTHING WILL BE CONNECTED

These upcoming products show where wired devices are headed — for better or worse.



### Lynx Smartgrill

Tell it what you want to cook (it's voice activated) and the SmartGrill guides you through the process. It also learns your preferences. From \$6,000; [lynxgrills.com](http://lynxgrills.com)



### Luna Mattress Cover

Track sleep, be woken in the least disruptive part of your cycle, and apply separate temperature settings for either side of the bed. From \$249; [lunasleep.com](http://lunasleep.com)



### Arist Coffee Maker

Lattes, cappuccinos, and other custom drinks are ground and brewed to order via an app, which also lets you download new drink recipes and check on supply levels. \$699; [aristcafe.com](http://aristcafe.com)



### Pantelligent

The Bluetooth-connected frying pan transmits your current (and target) heat and tells you when to flip and when you're done. \$249; [pantelligent.com](http://pantelligent.com)



# Action Gets Sharper

Better optics highlight the new choices for recording and reliving your next adventure.

## 1 BEST FOR EASE OF USE Polaroid Cube

\$100; polaroid.com

A low-cost, high-reward pick: Its 124-degree wide-angle lens nabs better 1080p footage than a hundred-dollar camera should. We dig the way a magnet embedded in the Cube enables creative mounting to metal surfaces.

## 2 BEST FOR ALL-AROUND GoPro Hero4 Black

\$500; gopro.com

With resolution that tops out at 4K, the GoPro just keeps getting better. The Hero4 Black doesn't have a perfect design or stellar battery life, but most adventurers who use one will come back satisfied with its output: fantastic footage and stunningly crisp 12-megapixel stills even underwater or in low light, due to a fast image processor.

## 3 BEST FOR PANORAMAS Kodak PixPro SP360

From \$349; kodakpixpro.com

If you're looking to nab ultrawide panoramic shots, via a drone perhaps, look to the PixPro: Its lens captures a 214-degree angle (GoPro's: 170). "Ring Mode" stretches the pic a full 360 degrees. But its software is buggier than most; consider this one a specialist.

## 4 BEST FOR SOUND Sony FDR-X1000V

\$500; store.sony.com

Like the GoPro here, this Sony shoots 4K footage at 30 frames per second and has a 170-degree field of view. Buy it if you're a stickler for sound: The Sony boasts a wind-noise-reducing stereo mic, while the Hero4 Black records in mono.

## 5 BEST FOR COLORS Replay XD Prime X

\$300; replayxd.com

It has a less exaggerated field of view than the competition, but we found the Prime X best at capturing rich, natural colors, thanks to its real-glass multi-element lens. The compact aluminum housing is also tough as hell.



### SHAKE IT

Sony's FDR-X1000V has an electronic image-stabilization mode that combats shaky hands and vibrations given off by car and drone motors. Its trade-off: The 170-degree field of view goes down to 120.

PROP STYLING BY MARIANA VERA FOR HALLEY RESOURCES





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# Stylish Weather Beaters

The new breed of rain shells has breathable fabrics, hidden features, and enough appeal to go from trail to office.



## DRY INSIDE

With elastic cuffs and a water-repellent finish inside and out, the **Fogoule** definitely resists the wet. But vents in the pits and on the back ensure you won't get swampy on warmer days.

### The Alpinist Classic, Improved

Climbers of the early 1970s waited out storms in foam-backed *cagoules*. That classic has been made more weatherproof and comfortable with the **Patagonia Fogoule**, whose recycled two-layer poly, seam-sealed shell boasts plenty of ventilation but skips high-tech sheen. \$249; [patagonia.com](http://patagonia.com)



### The Modern Trench

A mackintosh jacket can lend class to your dressed-for-the-weather look, but standard rubberized ones tend to leave you soggy. Not so the **Aether Stormy**. Two layers of Italian cotton sandwich a water-resistant membrane to help fend off rain, while smartly articulated sleeves and a hood maintain a composed profile. \$495; [aetherapparel.com](http://aetherapparel.com)



### The Cyclist's Shirt-Saver

Although the brand is better known for its casual-looking technical wear, we dig the sportiness of **Nau's Cranky** jacket. It's built for riding when the clouds could open at any moment. A waterproof four-way stretch fabric facilitates motion; a stowable reflective panel keeps you seen. \$325; [nau.com](http://nau.com)



### The Hiker's Go-To Jacket

For days on the trail when the weather could go either way, don the **Fjällräven Abisko Lite**, made of a thin wind- and rain-shedding cotton-poly. Need extra shelter from the rain? Seal out water by adding a wax coating. The scoop-style hood allows you to see ahead, even in a shower. \$250; [fjallraven.us](http://fjallraven.us)



### The Packable Rain Shell

The **Filson Angler's** shell is simplicity done right. It's built to bust the occasional storm, with a breathable laminate and a drawstring visor hood that keeps the rain rolling off. Designed for fishermen, this streamlined piece omits extra details that could snag a line. \$195; [filson.com](http://filson.com)



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# Recovery Tools That Work

Pro cyclist Taylor Phinney tested the top recovery tools and identified how they can benefit athletes of all levels.

## BEST FOR DEEP MESSAGE

### 1. Roll Recovery R8

The Rollerblade-like wheels clamp around sore quads and roll back and forth. "It's surprisingly strong," says Phinney. "This is easily my favorite tool." \$119; [rollrecovery.com](http://rollrecovery.com)

## BEST FOR AT YOUR DESK

### 2. Trigger-Point Nano Foot Roller

You could use a golf ball to knead aching feet, but the Nano's softer nubs feel more like human hands. "Waking up feet muscles with a good massager feels great," says Phinney. Kick off your shoes at the office and rub away aches. \$25; [tptherapy.com](http://tptherapy.com)

## BEST FOR MARATHONERS

### 3. Rumble-Roller

Runners with tight hamstrings will

like this barrel's lugs, which dig in much like a masseuse's thumbs. "This thing is a torture device," says Phinney, who recommends the firmer black version. \$70; [rumbleroller.com](http://rumbleroller.com)

## BEST FOR HARD-TO-REACH AREAS

### 4. Addaday Type A+ Ultra Roller

Phinney likes the rotating gears on this sticklike device that isolate knots. "You can even roll out your lower back, thanks to a gap for your spine." \$45; [addaday.com](http://addaday.com)

## BEST FOR COMPETITORS

### 5. Marc Pro

The price will deter recreational athletes, but the Marc Pro uses

electrical impulses to increase blood flow to tired muscles. "It's strong enough to be effective, but you won't hurt yourself," says Phinney. \$650; [marcpro.com](http://marcpro.com)

## BEST FOR TRAVEL

### 6. Pro-Tec Orb

This 5-inch ball can be tucked in a carry-on bag, so you can massage sore glutes and calves on the road. "It holds its shape under your weight and gets the nastiness out," says Phinney. \$20; [injurybegone.com](http://injurybegone.com)

## BEST FOR STRETCHING

### 7. SKLZ AccuStrap

"Honestly, a lacrosse ball can do virtually the same trigger-point therapy," Phinney says. But the strap lets you precisely place the ball over tight spots as you lean against a wall. Plus, it doubles as a stretching rope. \$30; [sklz.com](http://sklz.com)



## EXPERT TEST

Pro cyclist **Taylor Phinney** races around the world for the BMC Racing Team. He tested these tools after surgery to repair a broken leg he suffered in a crash at the USA Cycling Professional Road Championship last May.



# WEIGHT LOSS ENGINEERED FOR MEN.



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A clinical study has shown that overweight men using Slimquick Pure Men's key ingredient, along with an 1850-calorie diet, lost 38 pounds vs. 10 pounds with diet alone in just 13 weeks. ©SLIMQUICK 2014. All rights reserved.

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# High-Performance Bikes for Beginners

Have fun and ride with confidence, thanks to new lightweight construction.

**HIGH-POWERED SUPERBIKES FELL** out of favor when the Great Recession hit, but the unexpected upside of those lean times has been a newfound focus on designing smaller, more affordable motorcycles — exactly the sort of bike that's ideal for new riders. These beginner-friendly rides feature less powerful engines to keep acceleration and top speed in check as you build hours in the saddle. Plus, they're

constructed with lighter, easier-to-wrestle frames that are low to the ground, delivering smooth handling and confidence for novice riders. And should you drop one on its side, the budget nature of such bikes means repairs generally cost less, too. These five starter bikes combine striking looks with surprising performance, making it all but irresistible for the curious to join the two-wheeled world.

## The Updated Cruiser

The **Kawasaki Vulcan S** abandons the retro styling and analog pretensions commonly found on cruisers for a contemporary aesthetic and an ergonomic setup. The saddle, foot pegs, and handlebars can be adjusted to suit the rider's frame — controls are moved closer to the body of shorter riders, farther away from taller riders. Combined with a mellow 649cc parallel-twin engine, a surprisingly slim body, and a low 27.8-inch seat height, the Vulcan proves to be a stable, confidence-inspiring ride that you can grow into. *From \$6,999; [kawasaki.com](http://kawasaki.com)*



## The Practical Sport Bike

Speed is the enemy of a new rider. However, it's hard not to crave the thrill of a sport bike built to accelerate and corner on pavement. Fortunately the **Honda CB300F** still puts you in a position to go fast, albeit on a lightweight package that scores 71 miles per gallon. This naked bike won't set the world on fire with its single-cylinder engine, but it's easy to flick into corners and its upright seating is comfortable enough for all-day rides. *\$3,999; [powersports.honda.com](http://powersports.honda.com)*



### The Track-Ready Racer

KTM's big-engine Super Dukes are burly bikes that tend to attract uber-experienced riders. Perfect for motorcyclists who don't want to spend every weekend knee-dragging at a racetrack, the new **KTM 390 Duke** maintains its supervillain looks but is more approachable for casual riders. Though the KTM's 373cc, single-cylinder motor is downsized, it's still spunky on the open road and packs 44 horsepower. \$4,999; [ktmusa.com](http://ktmusa.com)



### The Off-Road Rider

While most manufacturers are hell-bent on cramming technology into their bikes, Suzuki sticks to the basics with this dirt- and road-capable ride. Equipped with a single-cylinder engine and an old-school carburetor, the rugged **DR200S** weighs only 278 lbs and offers a rewarding ride when wilderness trails beckon. Its stiff saddle, however, makes it less than ideal for long rides or daily commutes. \$4,499; [suzukicycles.com](http://suzukicycles.com)

### The Thrill Seeker

Although its fearsome bodywork mimics that of big brothers R6 and R1, the all-new **Yamaha R3** packs a diminutive, high-revving 321cc two-cylinder engine that gets 56 miles to the gallon. Beginners will like the 30.7-inch saddle height, which helps deliver a stable ride and, when bringing the bike to a stop, sure footing. On the road, its performance will satisfy adrenaline junkies who appreciate slick, racy proportions and a frame light enough to fling around corners, as a proper sport bike should. \$4,990; [yamahamotorsports.com](http://yamahamotorsports.com)



### Suit Up

Modern safety gear for a stylish vibe that won't make you look like you're headed to the track.

#### REV'IT! Windsor Jacket

\$320; [revitusa.com](http://revitusa.com)  
Comfortable enough for long rides, the Windsor has discreetly placed elbow and shoulder armor. Two chest vents keep you cool.



#### HJC SY-MAX 3

From \$300; [hjchelmets.com](http://hjchelmets.com)  
With this modular helmet, it's easy to take a phone call, sip a drink, and apply sunscreen during fuel stops — without having to remove your lid.



#### Dainese's Street Rocker D-WP shoe

\$210; [dainese.com](http://dainese.com)  
These fashion-forward riding boots have leather uppers and rigid ankle inserts for protection.





pausing to take GPS coordinates. He asked Honoré, the guide most familiar with the area, if he'd ever ventured this far in. Honoré shook his head, decisively, no.

After more than an hour, we came upon a wide junction, open to the sky and hemmed in by hulking monoliths of stone overgrown with trees and vines. It felt as if we had breached the walls of a lost city. If you squinted, you might've been at Angkor Wat.

**EACH MORNING** we poured hot water over our freeze-dried breakfasts, received and checked our radios ("Base camp, this is Mark, over"), and marched Wallenda-style across the fallen-log bridge that marked the unofficial entrance to the tsingy. Two things became apparent pretty quickly. First, we were definitely not the first humans to wander through the area. While inspecting one narrow corridor, Tyler popped his head into a nook and encountered a large ceramic bowl. Simon guessed that it dated from the 1600s when the earliest settlers passed through the area and presumably grasped its limitations.

The second realization was that while the sharp crevices of the tsingy were fascinating, there were even more interesting things happening in what appeared to be a very large cave system beneath it. This was a mixed blessing. For someone on the run from ennui, the prospect of not only visiting someplace where almost no one had set foot but then sneaking into that place's abandoned basement was irresistible. I do not, however, love confined spaces. Also, during an awkward tsingy dismount, I had sprained my right ankle, which swelled to the size and shape of an Ugg. I spent a day on the disabled list, much of which I passed sitting pleasantly beneath a large shade tree in the Malagasy camp, watching Nina hand-sort that evening's rice as if panning for gold.

After a dinner of zebu kebabs, Tim sat down next to me. "I'm pulling for you to get out there and see those caves tomorrow, Mark," he said. "There's a saying in the Army — with sprains, motion is lotion. If you can work through a little pain, I promise you'll see some amazing things."

Seeing as I had already, after a couple of whiskeys on an empty stomach, confessed to Tim that he made me proud to be an American, I was in no position to argue. My last night as a speleological virgin was a restless one, as the approaching full moon coaxed all sorts of nocturnal animals out of the forest and into our camp for a wee-hours hootenanny. One species of lemur grunted like pigs, loud enough to render earplugs useless. More than once, I dozed off only to wake suddenly, the surround-sound blooping and bleeping having conjured visions of passing out on the floor of a video arcade.

**I WAS EXPECTING** something a bit more dramatic, perhaps akin to the *ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE* inscription that greets Dante's narrator above the portal to Hell. But the opening into what the Malagasy guides later named Anjohibetsara, or "big, beautiful cave," would have been easy to miss. We climbed up a short ledge and walked through a narrow crack into a room about a quarter-acre in size. A few tiny bats hung motionless from the ceiling, but otherwise not much seemed to be happening in the netherworld beneath the tsingy.

The antechamber opened onto tunnels that segued to other rooms. Some passages led nowhere, others branched off deep into the darkness beyond the reach of our strongest flashlights. Several spaces were littered with giant slabs of rock, like broken sidewalks, some piled so high that we had to military crawl through their tightest gaps. One room's floor seemed, in the beams of our headlamps, to be littered with stone dinosaur skulls. Where water had dripped down over the millennia, psychedelic stalactites hung down in the shapes of chandeliers and giant squid. Occasionally, we arrived at a junction where the ceiling had collapsed entirely, leaving behind an oasis of light, with the spikes of the aboveground tsingy visible through the hole.

We were supposed to be back in camp by 4, and as time grew short we split into small groups to explore as many arteries as possible. Simon brought Tim and me along to check out an intriguing passage he'd spotted earlier. We scooted through a long space like an office ventilation duct, navigated a slippery gully, and scrambled up a steep pile of rocks to reach a room filled with dripping-wax stalactites. Tim had the unofficial job of naming discoveries and had just dubbed one sharp dangler Damocles' Sword when we encountered what appeared to be a five-foot-long male reproductive organ, fully engorged, hanging from the ceiling. Simon pointed his camera at the formation and narrated, "We call this the Elephant's Trunk!"

Simon checked his watch and walked ahead down a narrow passageway, shouting back that we might have time to squeeze in "one more turn." A minute later, we heard a loud exclamation: "Oh, ho, ho!"

Tim and I came over a slight rise to see Simon standing in the middle of an enormous room. Stone archways large enough to drive trains through branched off into tunnels in several directions.

"You're from New York," Simon said to me. "Does this remind you of anything?"

I'd come halfway around the world and slipped through the tsingy's defenses, only to find myself standing in a stone replica of Grand Central station.

**IN THE EVENINGS**, between sundown and dinner, Travis led lemur walks into the forest. Little was known about the lemur population

in this part of the tsingy, but he'd already seen evidence of an aye-aye, a species so endangered that even he had never spotted one. We trooped out carrying flashlights and binoculars, a string of fireflies, with Mamy in front and Travis in back. Since I usually found myself lagging behind, Travis and I spent a fair amount of time together.

Travis had an agreeably geeky disposition — he stopped often to point out spiderwebs and said things like "Wow, this is a really interesting fungus" — and an admirably eclectic résumé. He was a former skateboarder and mountain biker with a chunk of bone floating around in one knee as a memento of an epic wipeout. While still completing his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, he guided trips throughout Canada, Central America, and Africa (Kensington's 15-day "Madagascar Eco and Culture Adventure with Primatologist Travis Steffens" runs almost 10 grand per person); he traveled back and forth to Madagascar frequently, both for research and as head of Planet Madagascar, a conservation and development project he cofounded. He'd once returned home after an extended Madagascar tour and collapsed in bed only to be awakened by his brother, a nightclub manager, who had brought home porn star Ron Jeremy to meet him. Jeremy was eager to discuss the sex lives of bonobos.

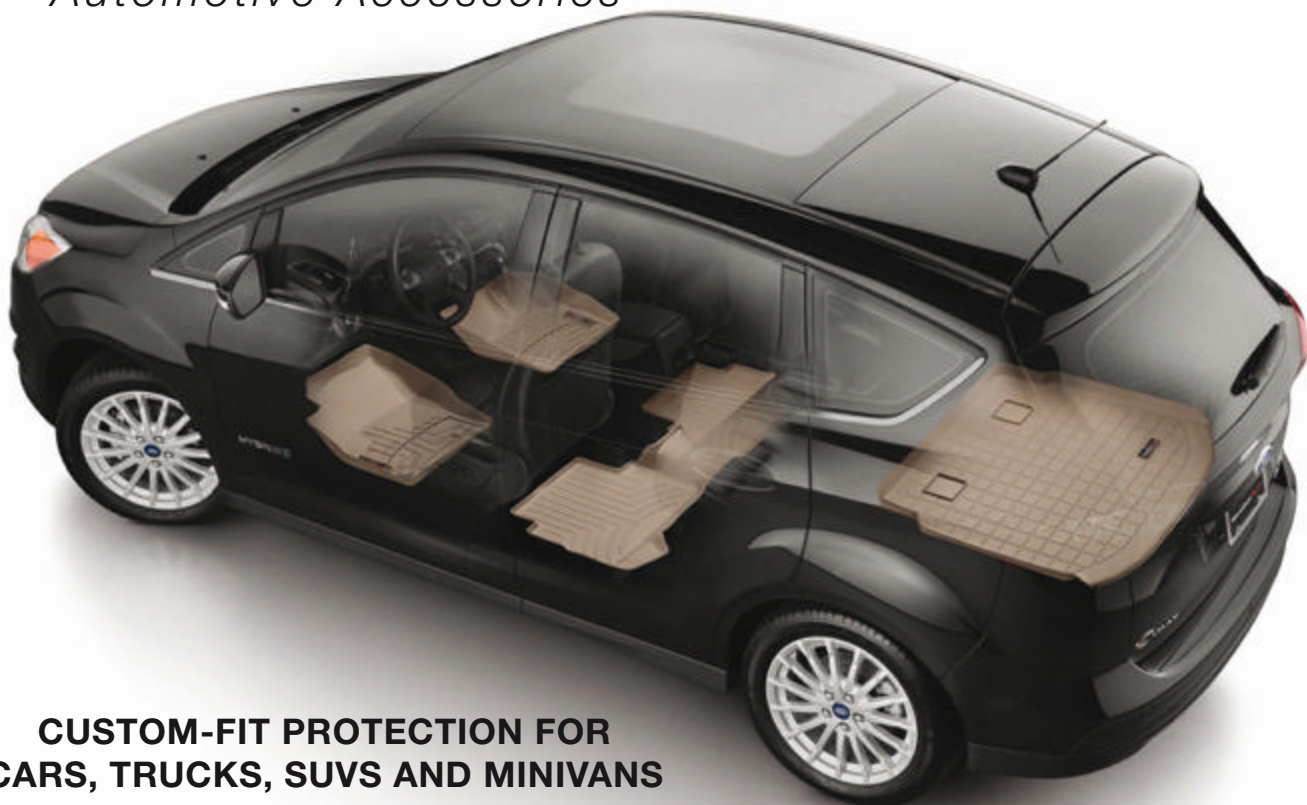
Whenever we weren't being quiet so as not to scare off the animals, Travis explained a little bit about the lemur's place in Madagascar's future. Slash-and-burn deforestation, *tavy* in Malagasy, has long encroached on lemur habitat, more than ever in recent years. While 2009 was bad for the world economy, it was near-apocalyptic for Madagascar: The president was overthrown (in part because he'd leased half the island's arable land to a Korean conglomerate); incoming foreign aid was suspended; tourism slowed to a trickle; poverty soared; and *tavy* accelerated, especially in protected areas like nature reserves. "Ecologically and biologically, this forest is still here because of the tsingy," Travis said. To make matters worse, when people's children are hungry, lemurs are viewed less as furry tourism ambassadors than as ready sources of protein. During the crisis, Travis estimated, the lemur density in some areas fell by 95 percent.

Which is where Travis' superhuman optimism, and the disposable income of adventurous leisure pursuers, enters the picture. His hope is that Madagascar's tourism industry can appeal to North Americans by following South Africa's successful model — take its existing national parks "and buttress them with private concessions and land, giving an opportunity to view wildlife in a private setting." Roughing it in comfort requires a lot of support staff, which creates a lot of jobs, which preserves the forests, which is good for lemurs, which is good for tourism. "The classic example in South Africa is hiring the lion poacher to (continued on page 100)

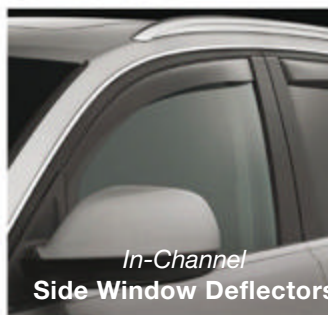
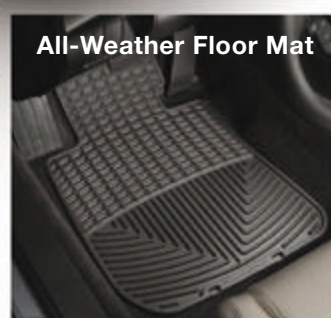


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become a lion tracker, because he's the best," Travis said. "He now makes 10 times as much and likes his job better because it's safer." Money goes a long way on the Eighth Continent: Travis' conservation project, Planet Madagascar, provides full and part-time jobs to 28 people on a \$15,000 annual budget.

Travis hoped an isolated spot like the tsingy might draw leading-edge adventure travelers interested in caving, climbing, and lemur-spotting. The big question is how long the area's sharp rock will be sufficient to keep the forest intact. During one of our evening lemur walks, Travis and Mammy were teasing each other about who had spotted the most animals — we'd seen several individuals clutching trees, their mirrored eyes glowing in our flashlight beams — when a pleasant autumnal fireplace smell crept up on us. In the distance off to our left, a mile or two away, we saw the source. A controlled blaze, perhaps a hundred yards wide, was slowly burning like a wave through the forest and grasslands, its pretty orange glow scything everything in its path to create pasture. Zebus 1, lemurs 0.

**BY MY LAST DAY** exploring in the tsingy, my state of mind had definitely improved,

though I wasn't quite ready to unfurl a **MIS-  
SION ACCOMPLISHED** banner. Personal hygiene was a different matter. After a week of climbing and crawling, pretty much everyone was tired and filthy. The labyrinth's stone incisors had taken their toll. George's pants were split down the seat; Travis' and Ian's shoes, new a week earlier, looked as if they'd been fought over by angry dogs. I dribbled coffee down my shredded microfiber shirtfront and didn't bother to wipe it off. The one exception was Tim, who looked as if he might have just finished some light gardening.

"Just out of curiosity, how do you manage to stay so clean?" I asked.

"Because I know how to move through the forest," he said, as if explaining something to a kindergartner.

We departed camp around 6:15 AM with a specific mission. The previous night, Simon had calculated that the cave we'd been exploring might be large enough to qualify as one of the 50 longest in Madagascar. (The country is famous for its big caves.) Grateful though I was to be witnessing possible caving history, I couldn't shake a sense of trepidation. Midway along life's journey I'd traveled halfway around the world, far outside of my comfort zone, yet I worried that the tsingy hadn't delivered a sufficient jolt of adventure shock therapy. I wasn't even certain we'd boldly gone where no man had

gone before. How would I know when I'd gone far enough?

George offered a possible solution to my conundrum. The previous day, he had discovered the entrance to a sort of underground river. "More people have set foot on the moon than have walked through that tunnel," he assured me.

Which is how I found myself stripping down to shorts and a helmet, slipping into chest-high black water with a flashlight tucked into my waistband, holding a piece of measuring cord in my hand and slowly crouching forward through the tunnel like an elderly caretaker working his way through a Roman catacomb. I was the next-to-last link in a chain of surveyors. Mud squished up to my ankles with each step as I turned around one bend, scratching my back against the low ceiling. The tunnel twisted right and then left. After several minutes, the cord went taut, measurements were taken, and orders to release the rope shouted down the line. I watched my only lifeline to the world above zip away into the blackness ahead.

After stooping over uncomfortably for several minutes, counting the tiny translucent shrimp who were my only company, I found a spot along the wall where I could lean while awaiting further orders. This might take a while, I thought, and I turned off my headlamp to let the dark and silence envelop me. Deprived of sensory input, my mind began to wander for the first time in weeks. I slipped into a deep meditation. For someone semi-sitting in the lukewarm, muddy, probably guano-saturated water of what turned out to be Madagascar's 35th longest cave on record, I felt strangely at peace. Was the calm I felt a gentle nudge from the cosmos, a reminder to live in the moment and not fixate on where my path had gone, or was going?

"It's a circle," the universe whispered.

Nicely put, universe! Hadn't Dante's narrator descended through nine rings of Hell until reaching an underground river, from whence he began his journey to salvation? Didn't Buddhism teach that life itself was a circle, of birth and death and — if you traveled far enough along its circumference — enlightenment? Perhaps I'd found the secret to life in a cave beneath Madagascar.

"Can you believe it's a circle?" the universe asked, louder than before. The universe, I couldn't help noticing, was a bit more gregarious than one might expect. I opened my eyes and was blinded by a burst of light — not, alas, a flash of metaphysical insight but the beam of George's headlamp.

"Bet you're surprised to see me," he said. "The cave loops around and ends right next to where we came in. Amazing, huh? I'm going to have another look."

He waded around the bend and vanished, leaving me in the dark, in a cave, beneath the still-not-quite-mapped limestone labyrinth on an island off the coast of Africa. In other words, I was in the middle of nowhere. Exactly where I needed to be. **MU**

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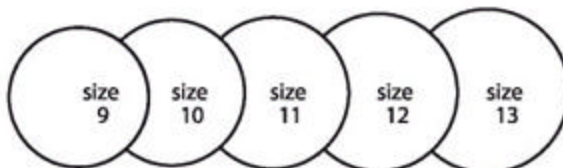
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became an activist of sorts, registering voters with civil rights icon John Lewis in Georgia. Branch then migrated to Washington, D.C., where he edited the *Washington Monthly*, a liberal policy magazine. Okrent was in D.C. at the time, and the two would play poker with other young journalists.

Okrent immediately noticed something different about his friend. "He was the best of us," he says. "He sang in church, he cared deeply about injustice, he knew he wanted to do great things."

Branch wanted to write about the civil rights movement, but publishers told him that he was too green for such a grand project. So he spent his twenties ghostwriting a series of books, toggling wildly from Watergate figures like John Dean to the memoirs of basketball legend Bill Russell. Branch moved in to Russell's house outside of Seattle for a while and had his first exposure to the intersection and separateness of sports and thought.

"One of the things Bill Russell told me is that sports are really deep, intellectually," says Branch. "He said, 'Every sport is some mixture of art and war. Some supreme mixture of competition and something that is beautiful. There has to be art in sport.'"

Branch put childish things away in 1982 and began 24 years of work on what became the trilogy called *America in the King Years*, a comprehensive historical account of the civil rights movement. Branch's pointillist details capture the cataclysmic movement of the second half of the 20th century so cinematically that everyone from Oprah Winfrey to Steven Spielberg has flirted with adapting the books to screen. It has been a disillusioning process for Branch: Oprah's production company was brought on to produce in 2006 and then he never heard from them again, and Spielberg also backed out. David Simon, who created *The Wire*, is the latest. Branch and essayist Tanehisi Coates have been commissioned to write episodes for what could be six hours of drama for HBO.

"We'll see what happens," says Branch with resignation. "It's been frustrating, but the options have paid a lot of tuition bills."

**I DROVE TO THE BRANCHES'** home in Baltimore a couple of weeks after the Michigan conference. Their home of 30 years is simultaneously grand and unpretentious. Inside are paintings of opera stars and a few mementos from Branch's lifelong second passion, singing in a vocal trio with two buddies from his college years. His wife, Christina Macy, was working in her office,

and Branch and I headed downstairs to talk.

The subject invariably turned to the Clintons and the battle to come, in 2016. One of the early scenes Branch witnessed in the Clinton White House was a philosophical argument the couple had over the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate Whitewater, a land deal from Clinton's gubernatorial years in Arkansas.

"You're president of the United States," said Hillary Clinton. "They're trying to investigate things that are not impeachable, even if they're true, because they predated the presidency, and if you allow a special prosecutor, which is almost like a fourth branch of government, you're destabilizing our whole form of government."

Whitewater ultimately added up to nothing, but it opened the door to an investigation that would end with Monica Lewinsky's stained dress. Post-Monica, Branch watched a man battle with political, not personal, demons. Clinton saw it more as, "What did I do to deserve to have my presidency ruined by an Arkansas land deal?"


"He wasn't wrestling with guilt," recalls Branch. "He was wrestling with, 'How do I get out of it?'"

Branch isn't neutral in the upcoming presidential election. His wife worked as a speechwriter for Hillary, and he thinks she has what it takes, even if it's different from her husband's political makeup.

"I didn't think she was hungering to run for president the way he was. But if people go to her and say, 'Our chances of winning the White House and doing what we want to do for America are here and there's nobody else,' are you going to turn them down? She'd never do that. She has a sense of duty."

**SHORTLY AFTER WE TALKED**, the University of Michigan offered \$5 million a year to 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh to lead its football team, an amount that would allow the school to pay each of its student-athletes a tidy sum annually to cover expenses and all guilt-free trips to Taco Bell. But it seems the issue of practicality and principle that Branch talked about still has a ways to go.

And there have been other signs of incremental progress: The NCAA announced in January that scholarships would be increased by several thousand dollars to cover the actual cost of college, not just tuition and board. It will give athletes money to travel home and, yes, spring for the occasional fourth meal.

Meanwhile, Branch says he'll keep pushing. On my way out of his Baltimore home, Branch showed me a jigsaw puzzle he and his wife were piecing together on a table in their dining room. On the box was some kind of psychedelic pattern, which looked migraine-causing difficult. Branch shook his head when I suggested that there was no way doing that puzzle could be fun. "No, you're wrong. We enjoy them a lot." He laughed a little. "I like puzzles — they're hard but not impossible." 

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# Bill Nye

The Science Guy on the Bible, technology, and why we need to go to Mars.

## What's the best advice you've ever received?

"Everybody you ever meet knows something you don't." A cab driver told me that, 30 years ago, and I'm reminded of it every single day.

## Was there a trip that changed your life?

My parents took me to the New York World's Fair in 1965, and that intensely optimistic view of the future is still with me. It was the result of technology, and that's why my current life's work is to advance space science.

## Why do you think we need to reach for the stars?

There are two questions that are deep within us, and if you meet somebody who says he or she has not pondered them, he or she is lying: Where did we come from? And are we alone in the universe? If you want to answer those questions, you have to explore space. Looking at it another way — if we were to stop looking up into the cosmos, what does that say about us? Whatever it is, it's not good. I'll contend that our ancestors who did not have that drive to explore, to understand nature, got outcompeted by the ones who did.

## You've publicly debated creationists. What's your philosophy about engaging people who willfully deny scientific evidence?

You know that guy is not going to change his mind

no matter what happens.

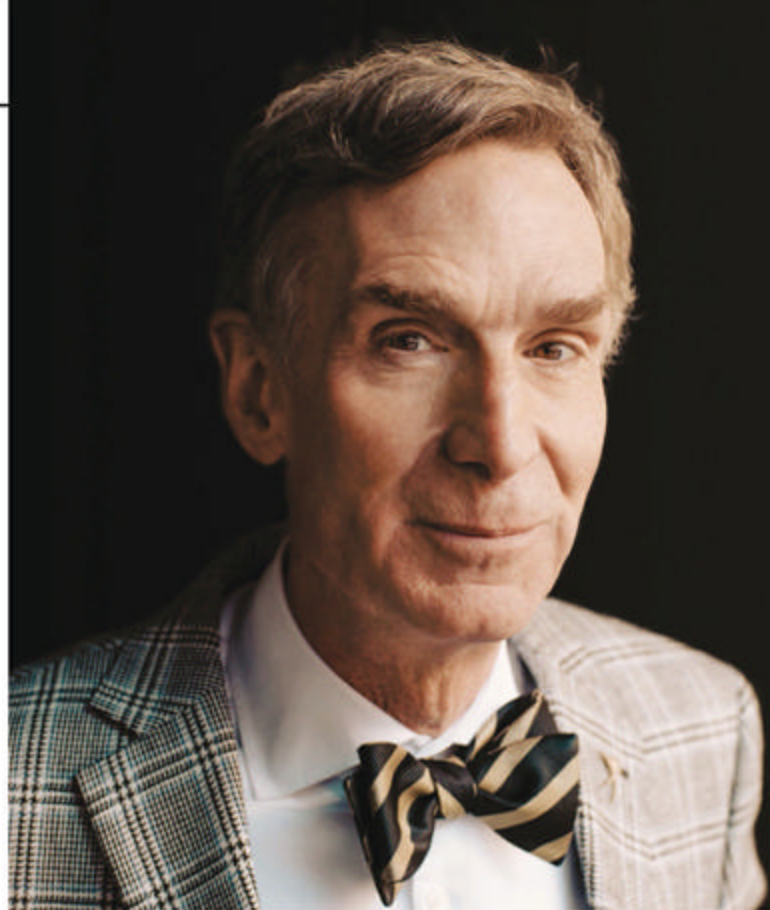
Evidence is not that compelling for him. By that I mean evidence of anything. A key question that was posed to us was, "What, if anything, would change your mind, Mr. Nye?" And I went on about "well, if the speed of light is not the speed of light; if you can show that the microwave radiation from the big bang was from something else." My opponent said nothing would change his mind. Nothing. Evidence doesn't matter to that guy or his followers.

## What do you think the average American needs to understand about science?

The seriousness of climate change. It's serious, serious business. Do not screw around with it. The fossil fuel industry has been very successful — using the techniques pioneered by the tobacco industry — introducing the idea that scientific uncertainty is equivalent to doubt, which wouldn't matter if we weren't all going to die.

## What did you learn from your dad, who was a prisoner of war in WWII?

Every freaking thing. My father and mother emphasized two things: Every person is responsible for his or her own actions, and, to the best of your ability, leave the world better than you found it. That's why I say that sometimes you've got to pick up other people's trash. Just because somebody else filled the atmosphere with carbon



dioxide is no reason not to address the problem. We're all in this together. After you use the paper towel, put it in the trash can. OK, can we all do that?

## How can America become a leader in science again?

What we would like to do at the Planetary Society is invest in space exploration. We'd like to send people to Mars and bring them back. If we were to find evidence of life on Mars, it would utterly change the world. We could do it for the price of a cup of coffee from every taxpayer once every 10 or 12 years. It'd be nothing. You ask people on the street, "What fraction of the U.S. federal budget is NASA?" and people say 10 percent. It's 0.4 percent. I applied to be an astronaut four times — but human space flight is not where the new and extraordinary discoveries are being made.

## Does religion play any role in your life?

Not anymore. I was brought

up Episcopal and I gave it a shot. I read the Bible twice when I was in my twenties. Then I realized the people who wrote it knew nothing of people in China. They knew nothing of first Americans. They were just playing the hand they were dealt. Also, women are not treated very well in the Bible. It made me skeptical of the whole thing. I gave it a shot, I really did. I'm pretty confident that humans made the whole thing up. Seriously. But when it comes to "is there a God or not?" I'm the first to point out you can't know. I'm agnostic. You can't prove there's a God or not. I accept that. Some people find that very troubling. I find it empowering and cool.

—INTERVIEWED BY SEAN WOODS

**Nye is the author of *Undeniable: Evolution and the Science of Creation* and the CEO of the Planetary Society. He hosted PBS's *Bill Nye the Science Guy* for five seasons.**



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